

# Wives of the Prophet

(PEACE BE UPON HIM)

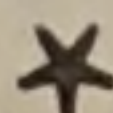
First edition 1925  
Second edition 1961  
Third (revised & enlarged) edition 1966  
Fourth (completely revised) edition 1977

By

KILAM HUSSAIN MALIK

B.A., LL.B. (ALIG.)

As a library book in the North-West  
Frontier Province vide D.P.L.,  
Peshawar, circular letter No.  
15-107 dated 19 March 1954  
and  
in the Bahawalpur Division





## PROPHET'S PRIVILEGE FOR MARRIAGES

O Prophet ! We have  
Made lawful to thee  
Thy wives to whom thou  
Hast paid their dowers ;  
And those whom thy  
Right hand possesses out of  
The prisoners of war whom  
Allah has assigned to thee ;  
And daughters of thy paternal  
Uncles and aunts, and daughters  
Of thy maternal uncles  
And aunts, who migrated  
(From Mecca to Medina) with thee ;  
And any believing woman  
Who dedicates her soul  
To the Prophet if the Prophet  
Wishes to wed her ;—this  
Only for thee, and not  
For the Believers (at large) ;  
We know what We have  
Appointed for them as to  
Their wives and the captives  
Whom their right hands  
Possess ;—in order that  
There should be no difficulty  
For thee. And Allah is  
Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

(al-Qur'ān, xxxiii. 50)

## FOREWORD

Malik Fida Hussain Saheb has put into his book on the "Wives of the Prophet" the result of years of patient study and thought. He has not merely read the authentic works on the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) but has also familiarised himself with the writings of unsympathetic and hostile Christian missionaries and refuted their unjust criticism. He has produced a book which is interesting, readable and handy, and his effort deserves encouragement and appreciation.

A.B.A. HALEEM

B.A. (Oxon), Barrister-at-Law  
Vice-Chancellor  
University of Karachi and  
Aligarh University

11 August 1952



## PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

Again after ten years of deep study of various books concerning married life of the Apostle of Allah (upon whom be peace) this revised edition has been given a new shape, so that the lovers of Islam and student community as well as scholars may find useful information on the subject.

The new Constitution of 1973 given by the present Government has given a new life towards the achievement of the goal for which this book has been written.

The women in Pakistan have very seriously taken up the matter and have come out with the motto "To be or not to be". At present women are in pursuit of equality with men. A few months back twenty-three foreign countries sent delegates of women to Pakistan from all parts of the world, to sit together and to create a new chapter in women history for achieving their well-deserved position in life. They are of the opinion that women should come out of the four walls of the house to share and protect the interests of the whole family battered by the onslaught of prices and work to meet the economic change in the country affecting most of the families.

There are various problems which require change for the uplift of woman. The curse of dowry system was a drawback for the emancipation of womanhood. The Government of Pakistan has passed Dowry and

## PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

vii

Gifts (Restriction) Act, 1976, wherein it is clearly laid down in Section 3: No. (1) Neither the aggregate value of the dowry and presents given to the bride by her parents nor the aggregate value of the bridal gifts or of the presents given to the bridegroom shall exceed five thousand rupees; (2) No dowry, bridal gifts or presents may be given before or after six months of nikah, if rukhsati takes place some time after nikah, after six months of such rukhsati. And in Section 6 the total expenditure on a marriage, excluding the value of dowry, bridal gifts and presents, but including the expenses on mehnadi, barat and valima, incurred by or on behalf of either party to the marriage shall not exceed two thousand and five hundred rupees. Moreover, as laid down in section (8) list of dowry, etc., shall be furnished to registrar.

Now many poor women sitting in home in these days of economic crisis will be able to marry and share men in all phases as good wives. They can work in the field for Grow-More-Food Campaign. Recently general consciousness has developed among the mass of Pakistani women in all walks of life. Education amongst women has given them chances to become doctors, nurses, teachers and appointment in key positions. The setting up of a woman's rights committee and celebration of a nation-wide Women's Week has given new life to the weaker sex. Having reached this milestone on the road to social justice and integration, women should pause for sober reflection. They should strive together shoulder to shoulder with men for the development of this country within the limits pre-

eg Pot SA



scribed in Islam. Begum Salma Tasadduq Hussain, President, Housewives Association, Punjab, who is an old sincere worker and has rendered great service to Pakistan has recently presided over a meeting held at Lahore and urged women to inculcate correct moral values and impart religious training among children. In this context her suggestion, that a women's institute of Islamic ideology be set up by the Government, requires immediate implementation.

Bahawalpur  
18 February 1977

Fida Hussain Malik

## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

It is a hopeful sign of the times that people in Pakistan are evincing an increased interest in Islamic studies. The passing of the Constitution of Pakistan shows that no laws shall be enforced which are repugnant to Islam, which is another happy augury. It is time the scholars versed in Islamic lore should bring out standard books on the subject, highlighting the fundamentals of Islam. For this purpose, the Holy Qur'ān is our primal source of guidance, not only for the resuscitation of individual character but also for the purification of our entire social structure against the corroding vices of the age. A good beginning seems to have been made with the banning and discouraging of adultery and prostitution. It is to be hoped that our law-givers would give a similar Islamic twist to all future legislation affecting our social and ethical welfare. The Family Courts will help women to seek remedy from these courts. But these courts require more powers and speedy disposal.

I am grateful to the brilliant collaboration of my neighbour, Mr Muhammad Nazir Ansari, for its new sheen, bringing the book up to the level of full-fledged text-book for the Secondary Board schools and colleges. His wise commentary has encouraged me much.



It is hoped that the book will win its due meed of popularity blazing a new path to love and veneration for Islam.

FIDA HUSSAIN MALIK

Bahawalpur

1 January 1966

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I am grateful to the press and various journals for extending their warm appreciation of my humble effort in a big cause.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Editors of *Dawn*, Karachi, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, Lahore, and *Mussalman*, Bahawalpur, for their most enlightened reviews, generally of journal *Faran*, Karachi, for their useful suggestion of my humble book.

I am equally indebted to the Director of Public Instruction, North-West Frontier Province, Peshawar, and Education Department of Bahawalpur Division for having approved this treatise as a library book for schools and colleges. No less is my sense of gratitude to teachers and professors of various schools and colleges for their kind appreciation and introducing the book to the student community, especially the Principal of the Bahawalpur College.

However, it is encouraging to note our new Government has taken interest in the subject. I have ventured to bring out the second edition in the hope of a new orientation towards Islamic studies, which is the dire need in Pakistan.

The nation needs the attainment of an adequate standard of Islamic education for women to ensure their well-being on moral, material and spiritual planes, as laid down by the Holy Qur'ān, and *Sunnah*.



The glaring disparity between the standard of social well-being enjoined by Islam and their present-day decadence in most of the Muslim countries is due to the prevailing ignorance among the Muslim womanhood of the fundamental moral values, inculcation whereof is the quintessence of the religion they claim to profess.

I am, therefore, ready to assist the Government in any way regarding their approach to this national problem of the uplift of women, which requires the immediate attention of our legislators.

I appeal to the learned men and scholars to join hands for ameliorating the lot of the weaker sex.

FIDA HUSSAIN MALIK

Bahawalpur

1 February 1960

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This book is the outcome of a long and laborious study of European and other hostile critics on Islam, many of whom have tried to vilify the character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace), particularly by misrepresenting his married life. "Muhammad the prayerful and perfumed Prophet of Islam was avowedly a great lover of ladies," says Miss Nabia Abbott, whose book *Aisha the Beloved of Muhammad* has been banned by the Pakistan Government. Another European writer, J.W.H. Stobart (*Islam and Its Founder*, p. 161) declares the marriage of the Prophet with Zaynab—the divorced wife of Zayd, his adopted son—as an act of indulgence and thus joins hands with other writers of his ilk to blackmail him as the slave of sexual passions. Similarly, Cook Taylor, in his book *History of Muhammadanism and Its Sects* (p. 85), has made the following vitriolic remarks about the same marriage of the Prophet: "He publicly married Zaynab and with shameless blasphemy brought forward a new revelation to justify his crime" (*Na'uzubillāh min dhalikā*). He indirectly criticises the Holy Qur'ān. This marriage was performed after the revelation of the Qur'ān (xxxiii. 36-39) by which the Prophet was permitted to marry Zaynab.

As a fervent devotee of the faith, these calumnies against its founder have touched me on the raw and



urged me to explore all available literature on the subject, results whereof are being placed before the readers for assessment of the true position and, at the same time, to enable them to savour for themselves the beauty and purpose underlying the Prophet's matrimonial alliances.

Incidentally, the study of this book will be a helpful guide towards the solution of a number of the present-day problems affecting the domestic peace and happiness of many a family home in Pakistan. At a time when religion is held up to ridicule by the rank and file and when the masses are blindly following the West in a mad pursuit of pleasure, and sex and sensuality are the order of the day, a peep into the arcadian simplicity and peace of the Prophet's household would be a heart-warming sight for the faithful sons of Islam.

While writing this book for the emancipation of women I must not forget to record my obligation to certain writers from whom this book has received valuable assistance. Not the least is the help given by my "Alig. Brother," Dr S. A. Q. Hussaini, at present Professor in Madras University (India).

It is a happy privilege and great spiritual pleasure for me to acknowledge my deep sense of indebtedness to my learned tutor and savant, Prof. Colonel A.B.A. Haleem, B.A. (Oxon), Bar-at-Law, Vice-Chancellor, Karachi University, who is an old luminary of my dear "Alma Mater," the Muslim University, Aligarh, and a patriot in the age-old cause of Muslim homeland, fighting for the solidarity of Pakistan through

inculcation of "Aligarh spirit". In a precise foreword he has graciously epitomised the entire theme of the book for which I cannot thank him adequately.

I am fully conscious of my shortcomings and I hope that scholars will be doing a great service to me and to the Islamic world by suggesting further improvements in the treatise which will be thankfully incorporated in the next edition.

Baghdad-ul-Jadid

1 July 1952

F. H. MALIK



## CONTENTS

Foreword, v	
Preface to the Fourth Edition, vi	
Preface to the Third Edition, ix	
Preface to the Second Edition, xi	
Preface to the First Edition, xiii	
Introduction, 1	
Chapters	
1. The Condition of Women before Islam, 12	
2. Status of Woman after the Advent of Islam, 24	
3. Polygamy in Islam, 63	
4. Purdah, 79	
5. Mothers of the Faithful, 88	
6. Conclusion, 169	

## INTRODUCTION

"Ye people, ye have rights over your wives and your wives have rights over you. . . . Treat your wives with kindness. . . . Verily, you have taken them on the security of God and made them lawful unto you by the words of God (Muhammad: "The Sermon on Mount 'Arafât").

As an alumnus of Islamic institutions, I propose to devote this little book of mine to the vindication of the Holy Prophet's position against slanderous attacks on his matrimonial life on the score of multiple alliances. In this book I have endeavoured to elucidate the circumstances which led up to each marriage alliance and to show that none of them could have been contracted from motives of lust.

The Prophet's noble and gentle disposition, the ardency of his desire to serve the weak and the helpless, his solicitude for the destitute and the hungry, his straightforwardness and nobility of character which won for him the title of *al-Amīn* (the Trustworthy) from the nobility of Mecca, his veracity, his commiserating sympathy for the suffering and the downtrodden, his steadfast devotion and loyalty to his first wife Khadijah—a lady senior to him by nearly fifteen years—are some of the facts that go to prove that though, later on, he married more than one wife, his motive in doing so was expediency, not the gratification of lust.

On receiving God's command for proclaiming the



faith of Islam he hailed the people from Mount Ṣafā' in the following words: "Would you, O people of Quraish, believe me if I said that behind this mountain there was a vast army poised for attack?" "Why, of course," was their unanimous reply, "you never made a false statement." "Then," said the Prophet, "I warn you of an impending calamity (if you persist in your fetishism and refuse to recognise the omnipotence of Allah)." And he further added: "So far as my knowledge is concerned, no one has brought a better gift than me which will not only give you a true way of salvation in the next world but an honourable worldly mode of living. I swear by God that I am the last man to convey to you any wrong message or any lie or misguidance."

The people were filled with awe at this clarion call and the solemnity of his warning. In him they found in general a true messenger and a guide, so everyone began to follow him.

Before the advent of Islam, Arabia was steeped in barbarism. The Arab standard of morality was low and sensual, if not totally immoral. Economic conditions were appalling and social service an anathema. Religion was a mockery. People worshipped idols and trees, stocks and stones. They imagined that God dwelt in natural objects and phenomena and worshipped anything which their imagination associated with power and terror.

The average Arab had no moral conception of right and wrong except the love of taboos (idols) he had inherited from his tribe. Loot, murder and arson were

their normal pursuits besides rearing of camels and goats.

In a society where tribal wars and bloodshed were the order of the day and where the victorious slaughtered males and carried off women and children as spoils of war, it is but natural that there should be a preponderance of females over the males, so that the surplus women posed a problem for which polygamy was the obvious remedy.

Nevertheless, Islam did not give unbridled licence to polygamy but kept it controlled under proper limits and, above all, subject to the proviso that the husband meted out even-handed justice to the various co-wives. "If," says the Qur'ānic injunction, "ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one" (iv. 3). Thus Islam has shown an unmistakable partiality for monogamy, since the condition of strict justice is hard to fulfil. Scores of orphan girls depended on relations who could not afford to give them gratuitous maintenance. Hence the evil of having these helpless girls as wives in unlimited number was quite common. The Qur'ān, in the verse quoted above, also prohibited the practice of having helpless wards as wives against their will, but permitted the well-to-do to marry more than one wife from such women as were not their wards but, at the same time, ordained that if justice could not be done equally to them, they were not to marry more than one wife. This condition is of fundamental importance concerning the marriage laws in Islam.

Many European and other non-Muslim writers



have levelled the charge of sensuality on the Holy Prophet and used disrespectful language against him. The most unfortunate part of it is that some of the young Muslims, not knowing the real facts, get disturbed by these allegations in their native ignorance.

This attack on the sacred personality of the Holy Prophet is not because of any scandal attaching to his name but for the unappreciated reason that he married helpless widows from motives of humanity and altruism, as well as political expediency. Thus it comes about that the charge of sensuality has been levelled against a person who married at the age of twenty-five an elderly lady of forty and stuck to her until her death at the age of sixty-five when he himself was nearly fifty. Up to this advanced age, the Prophet of God wedded no other wife, nor is there any insinuation even in the writings of the most hostile critics, in regard to his moral integrity throughout his life, including the lifetime of his first wife, Khadijah. The charge, accordingly, boils down to this that after his fiftieth year, when he was weighed down by the cares of his holy mission and the onerous duties of a rapidly expanding State, he (God forbid!) waxed sensual. One of the notable exceptions is 'Ā'ishah's marriage, a child of nine, whom the Prophet married to honour the father, Abū Bakr, who was the Prophet's devoted friend and companion. The great Abū Bakr and his compeer 'Umar vied with each other for the honour and the privilege of becoming the father-in-law of the Prophet of God and the latter had to oblige them. In the case of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar's daughter, Ḥafṣah,

whom Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān had refused to marry, the Prophet had to console the father saying that she would have a better husband, and later on honoured his word by marrying her himself.

The one purpose of this treatise is to show that the Prophet's matrimonial alliances were either political or were actuated by humanitarian motives. It gives the true inwardness of his homely and affectionate nature and the essential domesticity of his character, serving as a guide for the coming generations.

In what follows, I have given verbatim quotations of some of the vitriolic remarks from the Prophet's calumniators—remarks which a close study of his domestic life would reveal to be based upon rank prejudice and total ignorance of the sociology of Islam. But for all their calumnious propaganda Islam has remained a potent proselytising force and, drawn by the innate simplicity of its tenets and the exquisite beauty of its appeal springing from a sense of perfect equality among its votaries, millions of people all over the world have flocked to its standard. Indeed, its strong missionaryism has posed a serious threat to other proselytising creeds like Christianity, so much so that in the backward continent of Africa, where the Christian missions of Europe and America have poured millions of dollars to wean the native population from their traditional faith, the simple creed of Islam has stood like a rock, and no temptations of money have shaken the faith of its sincere votaries.

Watching Muslims worship in the wilderness of Africa, observe the Ramadān fasts in the sun-scorched



Sahara and perform rites of nuptials and funerals, wherein perfect equality and brotherhood prevail, the unsophisticated Negroes of this benighted land have embraced Islam in millions. Islam is a great dynamic force and has remained so throughout the centuries. Thus defeated in the field of missionarism, the Christian priests have resorted to the low tactics of besmirching the character of the Holy Prophet.

This book is a sincere endeavour to undo some of their mischiefs and to neutralise the poison seeping through the ages. It is to be hoped that it will remove all misunderstandings in respect of the Prophet's connubial alliances and foster a true appreciation of the noble and sublime motives underlying his political unions with superannuated widows of powerful tribes who were the greatest danger to the very existence of Islam.

Polygamy is not a system ushered by Islam. It was prevalent among the Arabs since the earliest times. As explained above, Islam has bridled unlimited indulgence in it and showed distinct preference for monogamy. Polygamy was a common feature of the Arab life. Indeed, in a society torn by tribal wars and vendetta feuds which decimated the male population, it was a downright blessing for the women bereaved of their male supporters. Islam played a restricting role and never put a premium on the existing practice. "Polygamy is an expedient to meet an abnormal situation and not the rule of the Muslim society," is the observation of a well-known writer on Islam.

In pre-Islamic days, women, throughout the world,

were subjected to great indignities and treated as chattels. No religion had allowed them equality. None gave them a share in the property of their parents or husbands. They were looked upon as an abomination, a source of burning shame and humiliation to the family. The Arabs took pride in slashing the abdomens of women and slaying the infants, if females. Poverty-stricken parents and haughty chieftains buried their daughters alive for impecuniosity and the family honour conventionally known as '*ird*' and '*anfah*' (honour and shame). Women had no equality with men in the eye of law. Islam was the first to give them this right. It was the first to give women a share in the property of their parents and husbands and a respectable place in society. In one of his sayings, the Prophet places women at par with "prayer" and "perfume". He has also said that Paradise lies under the feet of the mother. What better tribute could be paid to motherhood? It is sheer perversity to represent the champion of female cause as the enemy of mankind.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, women were treated as objects of lust in open assemblages, street corners, amid palm groves, behind sand-hills and dunes. Purchasing a beautiful girl and having her in common by a party of young men was a mere peccadillo.

The concubines of a father were passed on to the son. Love affairs between step-mothers and step-sons did not raise a single eyebrow. Prostitution was a raging vice. Islam put an end to all these disgraceful and immoral practices.



The Prophet said: "Woman is the complementary half of man, and of the same essence." He abolished all evil practices derogatory to her position, banned her persecution as well as the inhuman custom of burying her alive, and elevated her status to one of equality with man. She became the mistress of the house, the queen of the husband's heart and guardian and preceptor of her children. An entire chapter *al-Nisā'* (Women) of the Holy Qur'ān is devoted to the discussion of woman's position in the Islamic society. It is the woman who, according to fundamental principles of Islam, teaches how to love. The love that a woman gives to her child till he or she becomes conscious of himself or herself is worth praise. She feeds the needy child out of her blood. With man woman is an equal helper in every phase of life.

The first man, i.e. Adam, himself followed the devil and the Holy Qur'ān has testified this fact. So Eve, his wife, was not a party to the wrong action of Adam in disobeying the order of God. The Holy Qur'ān has ordained equality between man and woman:

"For Muslim men and women,—for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise, for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward."<sup>1</sup>

Before the advent of Islam an Arab could give his

daughter to whomsoever he liked irrespective of her consent. Islam gave the grown-up girl the right of "consent" in regard to the choice of her husband.<sup>2</sup>

It made the voluntary agreement of a woman the *sine qua non* of marriage. These are some of the boons conferred by Islam on the womenfolk. To these may be added the dower, payment whereof was made a compulsory feature of the marriage contract. It was payable either immediately on *Nikāḥ* or deferred until the dissolution of marriage through death or divorce. A property could be mortgaged to ensure payment of dower.

For long centuries Christians had been attacking the institution of divorce in Islam. Today there is

2. At a marriage a *Mawlawi* with the necessary witnesses and a *Wakil* is always present to read the *Nikāḥ*. He should also, therefore, be called as a witness. Before the marriage ceremony is performed two reliable persons are sent to the bride to enquire her consent to the contract of marriage. In this ceremony the bride's representatives propose her to the bridegroom as his wife, the bridegroom agrees to take her as such and to pay the dower called *Mahr*. This dower or settlement is in addition to a wife's share in her husband's property, if she happens to survive him.

However, where the father of a minor girl is present at her marriage and is a consenting party, no special recitations are necessary to make a marriage valid under the *Ḥanafī* Law. When a child is given in marriage by any person other than the father or the grandfather, he or she has the option of either ratifying it or repudiating it on attaining puberty. The only difference between the *Sunnī* Law and *Shī'ah* Law on the question of option at puberty is that, whereas, according to the latter school, marriage contract for a minor by a person other than the father or grandfather is wholly ineffective until it is ratified by the minor on attaining puberty. According to the (*Ḥanafī*) *Sunnīs* it continues to be effective until it is cancelled by the minor. Both schools give the minor absolute power either to ratify or to cancel the unauthorised marriage. The (*Ḥanafī*) *Sunnī* Law presumes ratification when the girl after attaining the age of puberty has remained silent and has allowed the husband to consummate the marriage.



not a single civilised Christian country where divorce is not allowed by the courts. The Prophet called divorce a necessary evil, "the most distasteful course open to the married couple". Paradoxically enough, the necessity of this odious institution is now universally recognised.

In these pages I have tried to sum up briefly all that the Great Prophet of Islam did for women both by precept and example, with particular reference to his personal dealings with his wives. His was the greatest contribution to the cause of eliminating the sufferings of enslaved womanhood. George Meredith has said: "Woman is the last thing civilized by man." But the fact is that as a woman rises in the scale of culture, she pulls up the entire family along with her, including her husband, which is a truly uphill task.

For long centuries civilisations like those of the Greeks, Romans and Chinese, at the height of their cultural prosperity, failed to accord women a status comparable to that given them by Islam. To the Hebrews who tell their women: "Thy desire is for thy husband and he shall rule over thee," Islam rejoins: "Woman is the sovereign of your house and is entitled to the same rights as you. The same is due to her as is due from her." Indeed, Islam is the only religion to give woman her rightful place in society, and treat her as coequal with man. The Holy Prophet said: "Best man is he who is kind to his wife."

Christianity does not tolerate the name of a woman either before or after marriage. She is named as Miss so and so or Mrs so and so. It is only a priest

or her father who can give her in marriage to her husband and she cannot marry herself. Islam gave her a distinct and independent position. The Americans idolise their wives, the French treat them as mistresses, the Germans look upon them as household drudges and the Indians worship them as *devīs*. Islam alone has given them a truly human and independent status. *only if mothers + should*

From her earliest infancy right up to old age, woman is the ruler of the family roost. She is a fondling mother for the child, a pleasing partner for her husband in prime, and a consoling companion in decline. Islam, in upholding her dignity, has rendered an inestimable service to mankind. The Prophet of Allah is to be crowned with laurels as a champion of woman's cause.



## Chapter I

### THE CONDITION OF WOMEN BEFORE ISLAM

Before the advent of Islam, women were treated as chattels. Their personal consent in matters affecting their well-being was considered immaterial, so much so that they were never treated as a party to the marriage contract.

They could be had at pleasure and discarded capriciously ; the heart and the purse of man were the sole determination for her existence in an honourable manner. They had no independent status, could own no property and were entitled to no legal inheritance.

The victors of wars treated the womenfolk of the vanquished as part of the loot. Outside Arabia things were no better. In India, Egypt and all European countries, women were treated worse than slaves. In Arabia, particularly just before Islam, their plight was unspeakable. They were not regarded as homosapiens but a sort of sub-species between man and animal. The barbarous custom of *sati* among the Hindus of India, condemning widows to fiery death at their husbands' funeral pyre is just an instance of their age-old degradation. The widow was and still is a despised creature, inauspicious, and shunned like plague. In pre-Islamic days, a child widow was held responsible for the death of her husband and was an object of

scorn and contempt. The status of those who evaded *sati* was so disgraceful that the poor souls considered it much better to be burnt to death than endure life-long infamy at the hands of a saddistic society.

The following are extracts from various Hindu sources showing the status of women of those days.

Professor Indra is particularly scathing in her comments on the character of women. Writes she: "There is no creature more sinful than woman. Woman is burning fire. She is the sharp edge of the razor. She is verily all these in a body."<sup>1</sup> "Men should not love them. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

The birth of a daughter in a family was not the occasion for rejoicing, but of general gloom and despondency. A verse of Atharva-Veda rightly echoes the universally cherished desire for the birth of a son, as against a daughter. "The birth of a girl grant it elsewhere, here grant a body."<sup>3</sup> The *Aitareya-Brahmana* also lays down that daughters are fruitful cause of misery. In an interesting legend of Shunashepa the sage Narada discourses on the importance of having a son before Harishchandra in the following words: "In him a father prays a debt and reaches immortality when he beholds the countenance of a son born to him alive."<sup>4</sup>

Women captured in war from rival clan or otherwise caught in the matrimonial mesh were necessarily kept in subjection and treated more like harlots than

1. *Status of Women in Mahabharata*, p. 16.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 21

4. Macdonell, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 208.



human beings. Even in such later times as the age of the Epics, we find Droupadi, the royal consort of the five Pandavas, pawned by Yudheshtra in a game of dice which he played with Shakuni. The Kurus who won the game forcibly dragged the queen from her royal apartment and subjected her to a series of indignities which made the blood of her royal husband boil. "But they were so utterly demoralized that they could not raise their voice in protest, not even their little finger, in expostulation because, forsooth, they had lost the game."<sup>5</sup>

The Asura form of marriage among the ancient Hindus was a kind of sale by the father of his daughter. The legislature did not alleviate their lot as they never inherited any property. In India of those days girls were dedicated to gods which was a virtual marriage so that they may have the use of their bodies in much the same way as married men had the use of their wives. Eventually, they passed into the hands of priests and Dharmakarthis or trustees attached to the temples in much the same way as offerings dedicated to the gods, being considered as part of the perquisites of priests and officials. Women in Vedic times were treated as spoils of war. After victory they were forcibly abducted and distributed as articles of booty. A husband in an Atharva hymn proclaims that his wife has been given to him by God to serve him and to secure progeny. He further calls her as his Pashya or dependant. Those women who gave birth to daughters only were ignored by their husbands

5. Dr. Abinasha Chandra Das, *Rigvedic Culture*, pp. 105-06.

in every respect. In those days a Hindu marriage was indissoluble. Neither adultery nor prostitution could dissolve a Hindu marriage, and even after the death of her husband a woman could not claim divorce. It was a union of two souls for good, an eternally unbreakable bond. Death could not divide the married couple on either the physical or spiritual side. Thus the killing Milhila, offering the hand of her daughter to the prince of Ajodhya, says :

"This is Sita, child of Janak, dearer unto him than life. Henceforth sharer of thy virtue be she, prince, thy faithful wife. Of thy weal and woe she is thine in every land. Cherish her in joy and sorrow, clasp her hand within thy hand. As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is the faithful wife. And my Sita best of women follows thee to death or life."

Even a woman who abhors her husband and hates the sight of him may not be released by the husband for good.

Things were no better in other countries. Nowhere in the world were women allowed to own property, and no country recognised women's share in the property of the family. In law among the Romans the son or the wife was classed not as a person but as a thing. In the Poter families over whom the Romans exercised absolute jurisdiction, she did not have the status of even a mistress. In Greece the wife looked after the house and performed other menial offices, but had no voice in the control of its economy.

There is not much evidence available about the social structure of Arabia before the advent of Islam.



From what there is, it is clear that things were equally bad. We have it on the authority of Robertson Smith that in many of the tribes of ancient Arabia there existed a form of polyandry with matriarchical rule. Wives were changed amongst one another.

In a tribal society, where internecine wars were frequent phenomena, a large number of males were liable to be killed, and, consequently, there were hoards of widows waiting to be absorbed in polygamy.

In later times, rational explanations were found. Poverty was pleaded as an excuse by parents among poorer classes who were afraid that they might not be able to support their offspring. Parents of higher social standing dreaded the possibility of disgrace and loss of prestige in having one of their own flesh and blood married to a stranger. Further, there was the notion that it was humiliating to beget a daughter. In a society where marriage by right of capture was common, girls might be carried off in war to become the wives or mistresses of enemies, as Arab war law recognised women as legitimate booty. In Iran there were two types of marriage. One type used to get share as well as their children, while the other were deprived from any property.

Here are a few pathetic verses representing the woes of a poor Arab concerning a helpless girl:

But for Umaymah's sake I ne'er had grieved to want nor  
braved  
Night's blackest horror to bring home the morsel that she  
craved.  
Now my desire is length of days because I know too well

The orphan girl's hard lot, with kin unkind enforced to dwell.  
I dread that some day poverty will overtake my child,  
And shame befall her when exposed to every passion wild.  
She wishes me live, but I must wish her dead; woe's me;  
Death is the noblest wooer, a helpless maid can see.  
I fear an uncle may be harsh, a brother be unkind,  
When I would never speak a word that rankled in her mind.<sup>6</sup>

The same Umaymah dies and the poor man sings:

Gone is Umaymah to dwell where tall stones tell of the dead  
poor waif at rest in the grave-laid safe at last unto dust.  
O thou one-half of my soul, how mourns the half that is left,  
athirst for the tears stream fast and full from mine eyes;  
Ah me! for her did I fear, lest I should go to my grave alone,  
unveiled to battle with want;  
But now I sleep and no care comes nigh to trouble my rest,  
at least finds jealously peace, when all it guarded are  
dead.  
This is the kindness of Death. . . . Shall I deny him his due?  
Peace has he brought to me, if pain be still the chief of  
his gifts.<sup>7</sup>

The Holy Qur'ān says: "Their 'partners' made alluring (to many of the idolaters) the slaughter of their children in order to lead them to their own destruction, and cause confusion in their religion."<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the reasons for the practice of killing female children, the Qur'ān denounces it at more than one place: "Lost are those who slay their children from folly . . . they have gone astray."<sup>9</sup>

Below is an extracted translation from *Nafat-ul-Yaman* recounting a gruesome tale of this peculiar

6. *Ḥamāsah*, 140: translated by Sir Charles Lyall, *Ancient Arabic Poetry*, p. 26.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

8. vi. 137.

9. vi. 140.



form of infanticide among the pre-Islamic Arabs.

Qays b. 'Āsim, while in audience with the Prophet of Islam, was asked by the *Anṣār* if it was a fact that he had killed his daughters, burying them alive. "Yes," replied the proud-faced Arab, "every one of them, and it was from an outraged sense of honour." He added reminiscently that this heart was never touched with pity except once. "It happened thus. I was out on a journey when my wife gave birth to a daughter, and a bonny lass she was! However, dreading my infanticidal proclivity, she hid her with her maternal aunts and, on my return, gave out that it had been a still birth. I paid no great heed to the matter until some years later when, one day, I came upon the little mite in my house. She had arrived on a visit to her mother who was just then busy braiding her hair with loving care and decking it out with beads and shells. She was a sweet little thing, and her charm completely bewitched me. I asked who she was. At this the mother burst into tears and owned up the secret of her birth. I kept prudently quiet, biding my time and then, one day, finding her alone, took her out into the wilderness and, digging a pit, shoved her in, shovelling the earth over until her screaming wails were smothered under the sod. I have never ceased to deplore this deed of saddistic cruelty," said the contrite father; "it has remained a rankling sore in my heart."

The Prophet's eyes were dimmed with tears. "This is the acme of cruelty; he who shows no mercy, deserves none," was the touched comment of the

noble Apostle of God.

This episode is an instance of the canker eating the Arab heart, and the Prophet's humane sympathy in eradicating the evil.

It was then that the Qur'ān further said:

"Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing them is a great sin."<sup>10</sup> *Liberal so as not to be too religious*

The Qur'ān pours scorn on the Arab's traditional attitude towards the female sex:

"When news is brought to one of them of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has had. Shall he retain it on (sustenance and) contempt, or bury it in the dust. Ah! what an evil (choice) they decide on?"<sup>11</sup>

As already stated, the practice of capturing women in battle was widely followed among the pre-Islamic Arabs and this captivity meant lifelong degradation and debasement for the unfortunate victim.

The point is well illustrated by the story told by 'Urwah b. Alward. He once carried off a married woman from Muzaynah. On his way home coming to an encampment, he was made to drink wine by the men of the place. They asked him to part with his captive which he did in exercise of his lawful right, though, in actual fact, he regretted the deed on regaining sobriety.

The captured woman and her children, if any, became members of the tribe. Her master had com-

10. xvii. 31.

11. xvi. 58-59.



plete authority over her as well as over her offspring and property.

For women this appears to have been the rule. It is doubtful if any woman enjoyed personal independence to exercise the right of choosing her husband, or disposing of property of any value.

Thus the woman of pre-Islamic Arabia was in a state of constant subjection either to her nearest male kinsman—father, brother, or anyone having authority over her, or to her husband, whose right over her was as unquestioned as his right to any other property.

Besides marriage by capture, there also existed a system of marriage by purchase. Here the suitor paid some amount to the father or the nearest kinsman of the girl he wished to marry, apart from the sum given to the girl herself. Thus in addition to the system of normal marriage prevalent in those days, there were three other types quite contrary to Islamic marriage: (1) concubinage, (2) unlimited number of wives, (3) temporary marriages, with no limit specified. In all these dower was paid only to the father or guardian of the woman. A woman could afterward be divorced ten times and fresh contract re-effected without any penalty or waiting for a certain period to be clear from every respect. Traffic on these lines was carried on between Mecca and Byzantine dominions and the Imperial Persia. Songs were sung at all stations enroute to attract buyers. Sometimes they were displayed in the nude, as objects of attraction for the lustful purchasers in open auction.

Woman was not allowed to possess any property nor could she inherit any from her kinsmen. Qays b. al-Khātim, when he went to battle, had to make a specific provision for his mother, leaving with his kinsmen a date garden of which the produce was to go to her support. The wealth owned by Khadijah, the wife of the Holy Prophet, seems to have reverted to her nearest male kinsmen, her brothers and their sons, or her cousins, according to the custom of pre-Islamic days. None of the property could be bequeathed to the Prophet or his daughters as the prevalent law of property did not give woman power of disposal, otherwise the Prophet's family would have lived a luxurious life after Khadijah's death.

The fact that women were not allowed to inherit any property is further supported by the fact that, after the Battle of Uhud, in which Aws b. Šāmit had fallen, his widow complained to the Prophet that the cousins of her husband claimed the deceased's estate and that if they were permitted to have it she and her three young daughters would be left destitute. It was only after the interference of the Apostle that she got something for their maintenance.

Modern scruples of the prohibited degree for matrimony were absolutely unknown to the pre-Islamic Arab world. Unlimited polygamy was in vogue and a man could have two or more sisters as wives or an aunt and her niece and, not unoften, a mother and her daughters by another husband. If a man left several wives and concubines behind, his son inherited all of them and had them as his wives or concubines excepting



his own mother. Adultery was no offence. In open and secret, adultery was in vogue. Islam stopped adultery. On the whole, Islam moulded the life of man on the pattern laid down in the Holy Qur'an. It advocates equality, fraternity, social justice and respect for the individual.

In England, adultery is not a criminal offence under common law or by statutes, although in theory it exposes the guilty party. Until 1925 it was a tort actionable by writ of trespass in an action of criminal conversation. But now damages for adultery may be claimed by a husband only in proceedings in the divorce court.

In Islam, adultery is punishable. If a false charge is brought by a husband against his wife, she can at once exercise her right of *li'an*, a type of separation and divorce, after getting a verdict from a Qāḍī who, if, after inquiry, finds the charge baseless, allows separation claimed for by a Muslim woman.

In the next chapter we shall see how all these evils were done away with immediately after the rise of Islam. Group marriages, flag marriages, and marriages by barter were all forbidden. Female infanticide was banned by Divine order and teachings of the Apostle of God. The Holy Qur'an draws attention to the infinitude of Divine power and asks man to have trust in the Almighty: "And there is not a thing in the world but with Us are its Treasure, but We do not send it down except in a known measure." The Islamic society later on expanded. No great soul should ever be afraid of poverty due to

increase in the number of children. Islam advocated frugal life, which should be free from the ever-present threat of starvation. Every fresh addition to the human population according to Islam is accompanied by access of wealth, happiness and prosperity of mankind. Iqbal, the Poet of the East, has rightly observed:

ہر فرد ہے ملت کے مقدر کا ستارہ

[Every man is a contributor to the welfare of the Islamic society.]

- 22 practice



## Chapter 2

### STATUS OF WOMAN AFTER THE ADVENT OF ISLAM

Humanity's relationship to God is not affected by consideration of sex. A woman is as dear to Him as man and both are equally accountable to Him for their deeds. She is enjoined the same duties and responsibilities as man, including prayers, fasts, *zakāt*, *hajj*, etc., and is admonished against all transgressions forbidden to man. She will receive the same reward for good and evil as her male counterpart. The Qur'ān says: "To men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn."<sup>1</sup> Spiritually and ethically she can attain to as great heights as man. "You are the custodian of children and answerable for them, also of the belongings of men," is the Divine order to them. She is enjoined to preach the doctrines of Islam in her house, eschewing evil and retaining good, taking lesson from the "Mothers of the Faithful". A woman should know that on the Day of Judgment no woman will be permitted to plead that her husband was responsible for her sins.

Since one of the rewards for good deeds is the enjoyment of heavenly bliss, a good deal of discussion revolves round the status of woman in Paradise. However, to imagine that heaven is a garden with all the

1. iv. 32.

worldly luxuries is not to know the real nature of the spiritual bliss, which the righteous will enjoy. These cannot be described in physical terms. Since man does not have a previous concept of the spiritual pleasure in his earthy experience, the eternal pleasures have to be gathered from Qur'ānic description. Sūrah Raḥmān of the Holy Qur'ān throws some light on the exalted Divine blessings on man and woman in the next world. An unsophisticated child having no conception of sweetness in the abstract can best be satisfied with being told that it tastes like sugar or candy. All the verses relating to Heaven and Hell should, therefore, be taken in a figurative sense.

It was the Holy Prophet who taught the people to dispell the prevalent notion that women were inferior to men or that female children deserved treatment different from that meted out to children of the male sex. The following quotations of Holy Qur'ān clearly show that both are equal in the eyes of God:

(1) "And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable."<sup>2</sup>

(2) "And their Lord hath accepted of them and answered them: 'Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: ye are members, one of another.'"<sup>3</sup>

(3) "If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female, and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them."<sup>4</sup>

(4) "Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure, and we will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions."<sup>5</sup>

2. ii., 228.

3. iii. 195.

4. iv. 124.

5. xvi. 97.



Women will also get equal reward for good and will be punished for evil. Their duties towards God are not dissimilar and, further, the Qur'ān says:

"The Believers, men and women, are protectors of one another: they enjoin what is just and forbid evil: they observe regular prayers, and practise regular charity, and obey Allah and His Apostle. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise."<sup>6</sup>

Further it proclaims:

"But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness—to them shall We give a Home in Heaven,—lofty mansions beneath which flow rivers—to dwell therein for aye;—an excellent reward for those who do (good)."<sup>7</sup>

Thus it is clear that with the discharge of their special responsibilities in their particular sphere they should receive equal rights in all the fields of activities. The Prophet warned his wives and daughters to be righteous and chaste. He told his daughter Fātimah to be mindful of her own actions, which alone could help her in the Hereafter. In worldly relationship she might be the daughter of the Prophet, but God would take into account only her personal deeds; she could not claim any privilege because of being the daughter of the Prophet. He frankly told a gathering: "I have seen more women in Hell." People asked: "Why, O Prophet of God, do they deny the presence of God?" He replied: "Women are ungrateful to men for their favours. They invariably fulfil their obligations but if they fail in one single instance, the women abuse them and say: 'We never got any

favour from you. You don't give us anklets or bangles or fancy rings.'"

This is a clear proof that his greatest solicitude for women was for their salvation in the next world. But as regards their relationship with men, Allah placed them under the guardianship of men. They are to be protected, guided and helped by them. This is no derogation of their rank but a distinct help and service. The Qur'ān says:

"Men are the protectors of women, because Allah hath given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them for their means."<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, such is the dispensation of Nature that man, from the dawn of creation, has lorded it over woman in both the physical and the moral domains, being at once her protector and master, her caretaker and bread-winner, while she, the weaker vessel, has had to truckle under to him in all matters affecting their common well-being, including the rearing of children and the preservation of family honour. This does not mean that she is to be treated as a household drudge, saddled with mean jobs and subjected to indignity. On the contrary, her honour as well as her virtue are to be protected against the onslaughts of the lecherous. She has to observe *purdah* which is the most effective protection against the seductions of the vile.

It is for this reason that the above-mentioned verse in the concluding lines says:

"Therefore the righteous women are devotedly obedient,

Because: Quran was written in a time we were about to re-feminist movements. Don't forget it's a book of its time. To understand the issue you need to have an open mind, it's the same in Christianity.



and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. And to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, and beat them (lightly).... For Allah is Most High, Great."<sup>9</sup>

This order of God is meant to set the astray right and not a routine undue domination over the weaker on petty pretexts.

As regards the right of man to chastise woman, modern opinion may take exception to it, but a careful examination of some of the extreme cases of perversion will show that it is more humane to correct, rather than to divorce and throw her on the street. The Qur'ān is careful in using the word "admonish" first and then the word "beat". Now-a-days women being more intelligent and educated than in ancient days, admonishing may be enough, and it is no pleasure to God that His male slaves beat His female slaves. Woman in this age has surpassed men in the fields of education and other arts.

Not only for women, even for men, the Qur'ānic injunction says:

"If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone: for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful."<sup>10</sup>

In order to strike a balance between the respective capacities of man and woman, Havelock Ellis has collected and examined a considerable amount of data. According to him, "Abstract thought in women is, on the whole, marked by a certain docility and respec-

9. iv. 34.

10. iv. 16.

tiveness. Even in trivial matters," he says, "the average woman accepts statements and opinions more readily than a man; and, in more serious matters, she is prepared to die for a statement or an opinion, provided it is uttered with such authority and action that her emotional nature is sufficiently thrilled." Further, Ellis points out that woman craves for more sympathy than man and she has not the same sturdy independence as man. This is a statement which lends support to the Qur'ānic view that men are the sustainers of women, because even if it were possible for all women to become economically independent of men, their emotional nature and craving for sympathy would involve most of them in partial dependence on men. In men, on the other hand, there is no such gravitating force to incline him towards the fair sex, unless it be of good home or the bond of children.

Thus, apart from economic and sociological considerations, a woman is far more likely to derive a sense of security from man than *vice versa* and, to that extent, she is more sensible of her dependence on him.

Islam has throughout been indulgent and tolerant towards woman and treated her with honour and respect. Once Umm Hānī (sister of Ḥaḍrāt 'Alī) gave refuge to an infidel. The Companions objected as to its advisability and propriety, since the giver of sanctuary, being a woman in *purdah*, could not distinguish between good and bad. The Prophet declared: "O Umm Hānī! we honour the shelter afforded by you as given by ourselves." In another context he remarked



that if a woman did not live with her husband she was not entitled to maintenance, in some cases not even to dower, and her place would be in Hell:

"If they stop and follow you, then you must maintain them in modicum comfort. Verily women are dependent and under your protection. They are helpless. You take them on the surety of God and in His name make them lawful for yourselves. So beware of God in regard to your responsibilities unto them and think of goodness for them. So I say to you all, 'O God, be your witness'."

It was due to these indubitable differences that Islam assigned to woman her particular role in household economy. Weith Kindsen himself remarks: "Man and woman are not equal; they have never been equal and they never will be. On the contrary, the difference of sex is so deep-going that two men of different civilised races are much more nearly similar in their nature than are men and women belonging to the same race." Dr Lombrese Gina, in her book *The Soul of Woman*, writes that not only man and woman are different in height, in structure of the bones and in the muscular system, but they are also different in the quality and quantity of air and food that they absorb, that they are subject to different sicknesses, their desires are different and, finally, they differ in their mental or moral tendencies." She further remarks: "Progress, evolution and life are possible only through differentiation." Islam has laid particular emphasis on preservation of sex individuality. Thus Abū Dāwūd records it on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, a Companion of the Prophet, that the Prophet invoked God's curse on men who imitate

women in their dress and manners, and similarly on women who abhorred their femininity by trying to dress and act like men. If foreign countries follow Islamic injunctions this hippyism will vanish which is a shame on the name of humanity. Blackstone, who was the greatest exponent of the English Common Law and has profound influence on legal theory and practice both in England and America, maintained that the legal position of married women was one of unity with husband. Thus, according to American Laws, a hundred years earlier, women had no rights, although Islam had given them full rights as a result of the Prophet's teachings. In Pakistan and India a woman is a competent witness to depose against her husband where there is a dispute between them.

Ordinarily, a Muslim is under an obligation to maintain his wife; he is also expected to maintain his divorced wife during the period of *'Iddat*, when she has been discarded. He has to make a provision for the maintenance of his wife for one year in the event of his death. In *'Iddat* women should not feel subjected to hardship and provision of ordinary means of livelihood is ordained. Says the Qur'ān:

"Those of you who die and leave widows should bequeath for their widows a year's maintenance and residence. And if they carry (life in their wombs), then spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden: and if they suckle your (offspring), give them their recompense."<sup>12</sup>

If a husband spends some money for the benefit of his wife, he pleases the Almighty and earns merit,



and the money so spent will be *Ṣadaqah*.<sup>13</sup> By a man and a woman a valid *waqf* can be created. The dowry belongs to the wife and no one has a right to take back her property. Dowry is the first debt during the life and after the death of the husband. Thus the status of women became very honourable and secure after the advent of Islam. The following institutions added to glorify Islam and its founder.

#### (1) *Inheritance*

"Allah (thus) directs you, as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half. For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each if the deceased left children. If no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third; if the deceased left brothers (or sisters), the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases is) after the payment of legacies and debts. . . . In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they have no child, but if they leave a child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. . . . If the man or woman whose inheritance is in question has left neither ascendants nor descendants, but has left a brother or a sister, each one of the two gets a sixth, but if more than two, they share in a third, after payment of legacies and debts."<sup>14</sup>

"God directs (thus) about those who leave no descendants or ascendants as heirs. If it is a man that dies, leaving a sister but no child, she shall have the inheritance. If (such a deceased was) a woman, who left no child, her brother takes her inheritance; if there are two sisters, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance (between them): if there are brothers and sisters, (they share), the men having twice the share of the female."<sup>15</sup>

A few more principles of inheritance are derived

13. *Tajrīd-ul-Bukhārī*, p. 300.

14. iv. 11-12.

15. iv. 176.

from the *Ḥadīth*. A man in his lifetime has absolute power to spend or dispose of his property as he likes. Nor is his right detracted by any distinction between acquired and inherited wealth. But he cannot make legacy about it beyond one-third. The *Ḥadīth* gives the reason: "Bequeath one-third, and one-third is much, for, if thou leavest thy heirs free from want, it is better than that thou leavest them in want, begging of (other) people." Thus legacy made even for charitable objects does not exceed one-third. No legacy is to be made in favour of one of the sharers, reducing or increasing the share of any of the deceased's relatives. "Surely Allah has given to everyone entitled to anything his due, therefore there shall be no bequest for one who inherits."

If, after giving the assigned shares to inheritors, something is left over, it is given to the nearest male. "Give the appointed portions to those entitled to that, then whatever remains is for the nearest male," is the order.

Thus shorn of sectarian differences and hair-splitting of the jurists, the Islamic Law of Inheritance is this. After paying off the debts of the deceased and legacies which do not exceed one-third of what he has left and are not made in favour of any of his inheritors, his property is to be divided so that the shares of the parents and husband or wife shall be taken out first. If the husband dies without leaving any issue, the wife gets a fourth. The parents will get one-sixth each if the deceased has no issue or brothers or sisters. The mother takes one-third, the remaining



two-thirds go to the father. If the deceased has no issue but has brothers or sisters, the mother gets one-sixth.

It is not here clarified what the brother's "and sister's" share will be. The prevalent view is that the presence of the brother reduces only the mother's share, the remaining five-sixths going to the father.

The husband gets one-half if the deceased has no issue, otherwise one-fourth. The wife gets one-fourth if the deceased has no issue and one-eighth otherwise. After paying off the shares of the parents and husband or wife, the rest of the property goes to children, the son having double the share of the daughter. If there are no children and there is a brother or a sister, one-sixth goes to him or her. If the deceased has brothers and sisters, one-third would go to them, the brothers getting double the share of the sisters.

If the deceased leaves neither children nor parents, the whole of the property, after the share of the husband or the wife has been taken out, shall go to brothers and sisters. If there is a single female, daughter or sister, she shall take one-half of the property, a single brother following the same rule. If there are two or more daughters or sisters they shall take two-thirds, the residue going to the nearest male according to the *Hadith*. If a person entitled to inheritance is dead but leaves behind offspring, that offspring shall take his place. If the father or mother is dead, the grandfather or grandmother shall take his or her place. If there are no brothers or sisters, the nearest relatives after them,

such as father, brother or father's sisters, shall take their place. By providing shares for the daughters, sisters, mothers and wives, it makes women active participants in the family economy. One-half of humanity are not chattels having no financial standing of their own, nor are they drudges to be confined in the four walls of the house. They can own and possess, enter into professions and services, join industry or trades and enter into contracts in their own name. If the American woman has acquired position and secured a say in various aspects of national life enabling her to take interest in social problems and advancement of women workers, it is because of the initiative taken by Islam in the matter. A woman, like a man of a sound mind, can enter into a contract as she too has a legal identity. Whatever she earns or inherits is her own. She is not obliged to give it away to anyone. When women marry, and Islam strongly recommends them to marry (for the Prophet said that he is not a believer who does not marry), their husbands are responsible for their livelihood as well as for that of their children. A woman is not duty bound to maintain her husband or her children. It has recently been held by Mr M.R. Kayani, Chief Justice, and Mr Justice Shabbir Ahmad of the West Pakistan High Court that, under the Criminal Procedure Code, a person having sufficient means is bound to maintain his children living apart from him even though he may not be entitled to their custody. Mst. Sharifan the wife of one Ghulam Hussain had filed an application u/s 488 Cr. P.C., in respect of her two sons aged



eight and two years, which was accepted. The husband went to the High Court and the court ruling was: "The court decided that no consideration as to the right of custody was relevant in a case under section 488, Cr. P. Code, and that any person having 'sufficient means,' who neglects or refuses to maintain his wife or his children unable to maintain themselves, became liable merely upon proof of such neglect or refusal."

The judges were of the view that the father's offer of maintenance on the condition of the child living with him could not be taken into consideration. Such an offer had not been provided for in the section, "To whom should the offer be made?" "There is no person who could accept the offer as the child did not know what was good for him and what was not good," it was observed.

The judges further observed that if the mother was compelled by straitened circumstances to hand over the custody of the child to the father and there was a step-mother with her own children, how could it be justly said that the mother's refusal to accept the offer disentitled the child to maintenance?

The judges decided that if the mother had the custody of the children, even though she was not legally entitled to it, it should be presumed that her custody was for the welfare of the minors so long as the contrary was not proved. The court was of the view that when the father made an offer of maintenance on the condition that the child lived with him, only then an application under Section 488, Cr. P.C., is made. It should be presumed that until that time he himself

had regarded the mother's custody as being for the welfare of the child.

The judges also ruled that the principles of Muslim Law were not applicable to Section 488, Cr. P.C. The court did not accept the reference and upheld the decision of the Magistrate.

Islam gives man double the share of woman. The inequality of the burden is redressed by giving man double the share of woman in matters of inheritance. In Islam a woman retains her own identity; she cannot be said to be a burden upon the society. The Qur'ān says: "O ye who believe! ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will."<sup>16</sup> It was customary among the pagan Arabs that when a man died one of his relations claimed the right to his widow by throwing his garment over her and then he either married her himself if he thought it fit by assigning her the same dower as her deceased husband had done, or kept her dower and married her to another, or also refused to let her marry unless she redeemed herself by quitting what she might claim of her husband's property. This unjust custom was abolished by the passage mentioned above.

The estates of a deceased or the blood-price of a murdered person who leaves no lawful heirs or leaves only a husband or a wife and who has not disposed of these estates by will, become the property of the state. Verses 2 and 10 of Chapter iv. of the Holy Qur'ān lay restrictions on forceful acquisition of the orphans' property and proclaim "to swallow the



substance of orphans is just to put fire in the belly." It forbids to be heir of women against their will, and gives share not only to *Yatāmā* (orphans) but also to *Masākīn* (indigent).

Islam gives no legal status to adopted sons, because there can be no genuine love between the adopted son and the adopted father. Islam has shown true insight in the matter. If a man having no son gives his property to the son of another man, thus depriving his real heirs of their due shares to property, certainly this action will create bitter feelings amongst them. Why should a stranger live upon the bounty of others? The Qur'ān says :

"... nor has He made your wives whom ye divorce by *Zihār* your mothers; nor has He made your adopted sons your sons. Such is (only) your manner of speech by your mouths. But Allah tells you the Truth, and He shows the (right) Way. Call them by (the names of) their fathers; that is juster in the sight of Allah. But if ye know not their father's names, call (them) your Brethren in faith, or your *Mawlās*. But there is no blame on you if ye make mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful."<sup>17</sup>

There is justification in the matter of inheritance, "for the male the like of two females". In a society consisting of middle-class people, and, in fact, in most of the Muslim families of today, the upbringing of a girl costs more than that of a boy and it takes a large part of the family hoardings to rig out a bride for marriage. If after this big expenditure at the time of her marriage, the girl gets only half of what her

17. xxxili. 4-5.

brother gets, she must not grumble against her smaller share in inheritance. In most of the families girls cost so much to the parents that there is very little left for brothers. Again, in her husband's property and the property of her children and relatives, there is a regular share earmarked for her. This half share was given to women in Islam at a time when no religion or community gave anything to women by way of inheritance. Nevertheless, it is open to brothers to give equal share to sisters and a custom or convention to this effect can easily be evolved. The passing of the "Shariat Act" is a useful step towards the solution of this issue. Islam never envisaged a capitalistic society. Had the rules and regulations of Islam been rigorously adhered to, capitalism would not have come into being at all. Even today we see that none of the Muslim countries is capitalistic in the European or American sense. Islam regulates human life in such a way that there is less chance for national wealth to concentrate in a few hands at the cost of a vast number of destitutes, which is the root of all evils in the present-day society.

## (2) Marriage

Now let us pass on to the institution of marriage. The basic idea of marriage is to safeguard one's morals, check fornication and evil practice of concubinage. There should be a rule of the society to maintain a high standard of morality and avoidance of party frictions. The Qur'ān says :

"Except for these, all others are lawful, provided ye seek them (in marriage) with gifts from your property,—desiring



chastity, not lust."<sup>18</sup>

Again the Qur'ān lays down :

"(Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time,—when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)."<sup>19</sup>

Islam regards marriage as the most sacred union, not simply a tie or necessary evil. The Holy Prophet declared : "When a man gets married he has made his religion perfect, then let him fear Allah for the remaining half."

A Muslim is ordered not to marry idolaters or give his daughter in marriage to idolaters. The Qur'ān says :

"Unbelievers beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of Bliss) and Forgiveness."<sup>20</sup>

Thus the only command is : "Then marry such woman as seem good to you." The words in the Qur'ān *Muḥsinīn* and *Muḥsināt* are used for chaste men and chaste women, respectively. So the marriage acts as a safeguard against sexual indulgence and condemns secret liaison and illicit intimacy.

The Qur'ān further clarifies the philosophy of life by saying :

"And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your hearts."<sup>21</sup>

18. iv. 24. 19. v. 6. 20. ii. 221. 21. xxx. 21.

Thus a married woman in Islam becomes a member of the bridegroom's family. The words "love" and "mercy" denote the blessings of God and a sign of extreme love and attraction with each other. Unlike a Hindu wife or a Christian wife, a Muslim wife is not under any strict bondage of husband or his children. She attains her own position, claims dower, a share in property and equal rights, and a right of separation also in case of conflicts of serious nature. She can remarry, can give away her husband's property in alms or to her deserving relatives and manage it according to her own wishes. She enjoys full legal status with a special identity of her own. "But if they disagree (and must part), Allah will provide abundance for all from His all-reaching bounty. For Allah is He that careth for all and is wise"<sup>22</sup> is also the Islamic order in case reconciliation is not possible between wife and husband.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said : "O assembly of young people, whoever has the means to support a wife, he should get married, for this is the best means of keeping the looks cast down and guarding chastity."

Marriage involves the care and education of children on which the future generation depends ; therefore this alliance is to preserve the creation of God and keep tradition of religion, culture and civilisation for centuries to come. It is an agreement so that if one party breaks a condition, marriage can be dissolved like other contracts. It is not, as in Christianity, a

22. iv. 130.



chastity, not lust."<sup>18</sup>

Again the Qur'ān lays down :

"(Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time,—when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)."<sup>19</sup>

Islam regards marriage as the most sacred union, not simply a tie or necessary evil. The Holy Prophet declared: "When a man gets married he has made his religion perfect, then let him fear Allah for the remaining half."

A Muslim is ordered not to marry idolaters or give his daughter in marriage to idolaters. The Qur'ān says :

"Unbelievers beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of Bliss) and Forgiveness."<sup>20</sup>

Thus the only command is: "Then marry such woman as seem good to you." The words in the Qur'ān *Muhsinīn* and *Muhsināt* are used for chaste men and chaste women, respectively. So the marriage acts as a safeguard against sexual indulgence and condemns secret liaison and illicit intimacy.

The Qur'ān further clarifies the philosophy of life by saying :

"And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your hearts."<sup>21</sup>

18. iv. 24. 19. v. 6. 20. ii. 221. 21. xxx. 21.

Thus a married woman in Islam becomes a member of the bridegroom's family. The words "love" and "mercy" denote the blessings of God and a sign of extreme love and attraction with each other. Unlike a Hindu wife or a Christian wife, a Muslim wife is not under any strict bondage of husband or his children. She attains her own position, claims dower, a share in property and equal rights, and a right of separation also in case of conflicts of serious nature. She can remarry, can give away her husband's property in alms or to her deserving relatives and manage it according to her own wishes. She enjoys full legal status with a special identity of her own. "But if they disagree (and must part), Allah will provide abundance for all from His all-reaching bounty. For Allah is He that careth for all and is wise"<sup>22</sup> is also the Islamic order in case reconciliation is not possible between wife and husband.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "O assembly of young people, whoever has the means to support a wife, he should get married, for this is the best means of keeping the looks cast down and guarding chastity."

Marriage involves the care and education of children on which the future generation depends; therefore this alliance is to preserve the creation of God and keep tradition of religion, culture and civilisation for centuries to come. It is an agreement so that if one party breaks a condition, marriage can be dissolved like other contracts. It is not, as in Christianity, a

22. iv. 130.



sacrament, indissoluble matter except by a difficult process and under strict procedures. Islam takes marriage as an open selection for a partner. There is no sense in keeping a man and a woman confined in a room when public fail to see them united, as is common in monogamous countries. Life is not for cell dwelling, resulting in illegal sexual relations outside marriage.

Marriage with another woman in the presence of the first wife is allowed, but a condition precedent has been laid which runs as follows: "Ye stand firm for justice to orphans."<sup>23</sup> Further revealed order is: "But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air)."<sup>24</sup> Man is permitted to marry four wives at a time, but this is subject to certain limitations specially of doing justice to all the wives in all respects.

Although some of the jurists do not consider physical justice necessary, yet the Qur'ān demands justice to a reasonable extent. Only those who are physically very strong, earn sufficient income, and, above all, possess sufficient balance of mind to manage several wives are allowed to marry more than one wife, and that too is only a permission in extraordinary circumstances and not an obligation of the Islamic law.

But a legislation totally forbidding the second marriage will be repugnant to Islamic orders which will encourage secret marriage. Indirectly it will encourage divorce and create numerous problems of

23. ix. 127. 24. iv. 129.

happy pairs. People can regulate their conduct with reference to such matters according to the needs of the day. The Qur'ān says: "And this is the way of your Lord, leading straight: We have detailed the signs for those who receive admonition."<sup>25</sup> Intelligent approach and interpretation of Islamic Code is very essential under the changed conditions.

On the whole, Islam rendered the greatest service to the cause of womanhood, and that also at a time when society was steeped in ignorance and women laboured under grave social disabilities. Islam granted them individuality and recognised their independent status in all phases including marriage. The Holy Qur'ān openly declares:

"God has created you men and women and put love and tenderness between you so that ye may find consolation from each other."

Further the Qur'ān assessed the dignity of women by declaring: "They are your garments and ye are their garments."<sup>26</sup>

In a society where people could marry any number of free women, Islam fixed the limit at four, allowing more than one wife only when justice could be done to all the wives, as already mentioned above. Islam gave even to the divorced women a right to the custody of children. Under Muslim Law, if the father takes away a son under seven years or a daughter before attaining puberty (if Sunnī) or under seven (if Shī'ah) he commits the offence of kidnapping.

25. vi. 126.

26. ii. 187.



Traditions of Islam are more effective than the "Guardian and Wards Act". The welfare of a minor child should be kept in mind for his guardianship and not the strict Anglo-Muslim Law made by the English legislators. A mother or mother's mother can more safely guard a minor than a father who can take many wives. Once a woman approached the Prophet and said: "Messenger of Allah, my belly was the resting place of my son, my breast a drinking place for him and my lap a soothing place for him, but his father has divorced me and wishes to snatch him away from me." The Messenger of Allah said: "You have got a better right to take him until you are married." This all shows that the Prophet of Islam gave power to a divorced wife to retain a child until remarriage, or if the Qāḍī for the welfare of the child passes only appropriate entrustment. At a time when the woman's right to inherit was not recognised in any part of the world, Islam gave this right to her. Every country is running after legislation, but Muslim women got the right in the days of the Prophet. Ever since the dawn of history the problem of women has baffled the nations of the world. But Islam rescued womanhood from the trammels of superstition and hackneyed conservatism. The respect, social justice and economic equality which Islam has accorded to women is nowhere to be found, not even in the most advanced and most enlightened society of the West. A close examination of the status of woman in Roman law, English law, and Hindu law discloses that under the Islamic law a woman occupies a superior

legal position as compared to women of other nationalities. The Holy Prophet effected a complete change in the legal status of females, i.e. from complete dependence and subordination to complete independence and enjoyment of full legal privilege, so much so that he placed them on a footing of perfect equality with men in exercise of all legal power and functions. This stands in bold relief compared with the state of law amongst ancient Arabs of the pre-Islamic days.

✕ Let us compare Muslim marriage with Hindu marriage and English marriage. A Hindu marriage is regarded as a sacrament and is accompanied by solemn religious rites. Hindu marriage is indissoluble in life so far as the wife is concerned, and even after death of the husband the widow may not remarry according to general Hindu law and the payment of consideration is not essential. In Muslim law, marriage is purely a civil contract, and payment of dower is the essential part of the contract without which a marriage is void. Marriage creates mutual rights and obligations on absolutely equal footing. Thus a woman ✕ in Islamic marriage retains her separate legal entity. A wife under Hindu law passes by marriage from the Gotra, i.e. family of her father, into that of her husband. Her rights over property, though recognised in certain cases, are not so clear as under Muslim law.

The only striking difference between the Muslim marriage and English marriage is of polygamy and monogamy. A Muslim can marry up to the extent of four (provided he has means and can mete out even-handed treatment), but an Englishman cannot marry



during the lifetime of the first wife. English law like Hindu law recognises the "doctrine of coverture". An eminent writer has very wisely described: "Our common law gives up the wife so thoroughly into husband's power that a woman who comes to altar, young, beautiful and rich, may be compelled by brutal treatment for which the law gives her no redress to quit it after a dozen years with a ruined fortune and a wasted frame." Our Prophet said: "Blame not woman for this corruption (of social system). Even the moon and pleiades testify to her nobility." Without the sublimity of her soul and sweetness of her character, the universe will be much poorer, specially when she appears in the garb of perennial and immortal love. It was a woman, i. e. Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah, the youngest beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet, who gave birth to personalities like Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, who glorified the annals of Islam and her daughter, Zaynab, who displayed unrivalled courage in the tragedy of Karbala. Other prominent ladies in Islam are Ḥaḍrat Āminah, Umm 'Aṭiyyah, Ismā' Umm Hānī, Fāṭimah bint Qays. Under the salubrious glow of their motherly affection thrived the future generations of mankind; and it can be safely concluded that the peace and prosperity of a nation depends on the true appreciation of motherhood. Man and woman are closely associated and jointly give shape to the universe of love; woman safeguards the web of life and her nature is a tablet engraved with the mysteries of life. Even if the wife has some unpleasant traits in her personality and character, the husband should overlook them. He

should think of the welfare of children because one should choose a lesser evil, for in case of discarding the greater evil of the responsibility and looking after the children will trouble a man more. The Qur'ān says: "If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good."<sup>27</sup>

Islam removed illiteracy; it deters neither man nor woman from learning different sciences. All women and men are alike. But both should acquire education "from the cradle to the grave". Education and preaching in Islam run side by side. "Speak to people according to the level of their intellectual capacities," is a well-quoted *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet. He once let free some of the prisoners of war on condition that they should teach the Muslims to read and write. A properly educated girl should not only radiate her charm into the environment of her home but should also become an equal partner of man in the wider field of national reconstruction. Early Muslim scholars like Rābi'ah and Shudah were held in high esteem for their learning. Shudah died in 574 H. Her lectures were well attended. "A fool, though he walks on the earth, is equal to a dead man, a literary man, though dead, is still like living," is an Islamic proverb. A wise man saw a fool seated on a stone, so he said: "A stone upon a stone." Again, a man saw a philosopher teaching morality to an old man. He asked him what he was doing. "I am washing a negro that he might become a white man," he said. Islam



gives definite rights to women not to be subjected to men in any way. Both a virgin girl and a married woman command respect in the eyes of law. As already mentioned, a girl has final authority and choice in her marriage. A marriage cannot be legalised if performed by threat, coercion, or under undue influence or fraud. A marriage can be effective only by the girl's own free will, otherwise it is void *ipso facto*. In the case of Abdul Kasim versus Mst. Jamila Khattoon Babi (Calcutta High Court) it was said that the rule of Muhammadan Law undoubtedly is that where a guardian more remote marries a boy or a girl when the nearer one is present, the validity of the marriage is dependent upon the latter's ratification and consent. The ruling contemplates a case where a boy or a girl is given in marriage by a person who, in order of priority, comes immediately after the proper guardian at that time. In fact, the consent of the nearer guardian may have the effect of transferring the authority to the remote guardian and exactly the same thing happens when the nearer guardian resides at a distance and no communication is possible with him. This rule cannot apply to a case where, as between the nearer guardian and the one who actually disposes of the minor in marriage, there are no other relatives who have preferential rights of guardianship. But the minor has the right to repudiate the marriage contracted by the guardian and the same should be treated as having never taken place. But after attaining majority she will be debarred. Even after marriage, if she is not satisfied on some reasonable grounds, there are pro-

visions for separation. Islam gave a status to woman, in some respects, better than given to many a European woman. As stated above, Islamic marriage is a civil act. A woman acts *sui juris* in all matters which relate to herself and her property in her own individual right, without the intervention of her husband or father. Her privileges are not by the courtesies which "come and go" but form a virtual test in the Divine Book of Law. By fixing dower as debt the wife is entitled, alongwith other creditors, to have it satisfied at the death of the husband out of his estates. The wife may refuse to live with her husband so long as the dower remains unpaid. If the husband files a suit for restitution of conjugal rights in a court of law before sexual intercourse has taken place, the wife can win the case if she takes in defence the non-payment of dower.

Man is declared as the supreme authority of his home. He is to be held responsible for the conduct of his dependants and is the ruler in his home. He is clearly enjoined by the Qur'ān that he is accountable for the deeds of all who are under his control (*rā'ī*), including slaves and animals. This law has raised the status of woman as she is man's co-parcener. She is duly protected against divorce in the interest of domestic solidarity. But if she herself requires divorce, then she can relinquish the dower as consideration for exercising *khul'* (divorce) from her husband. She can forgo dower by mutual agreement, e.g. *Mubāra'at*. The Prophet of God wanted to raise the position of woman high, because of her being the



weaker vessel. The fact of his being a mercy to mankind could be proved only by practical demonstration. Sir Rolam Wilson in *Muhammadian Law* (p. 50) has nicely summarised the reforms introduced by the Holy Prophet: "According to special needs of his time and country the Prophet was a very earnest champion of women's rights; this form which his advocacy took resulted in stamping out female infanticide, laying down definite restrictions on the earlier Arab licence about marriage and enabling women to pursue freely under more tolerable conditions, the only vocation, that of child bearers and child sucklers, with some measure of freedom in choosing their employers, some protection against gross tyranny, some reasonable notice before dismissal and, above all, with a substantial pecuniary equivalent to the sacrifices demanded of them. He found them, at least in some tribes, the property of their male kinsmen, to be used, sold or let on hire like other chattels. He left them (at least as his precepts, understood by Hanafi school) possessed of full legal personality, capable of acquiring property and contracting on their own accounts and conversely amenable to the general criminal law."

The Prophet's love for the weak, the tender-aged girls as well as boys, and his affectionate patting and lifting them in his lap shows his innate fondness for them. One of his sons died on his breast in the smoky house of a nurse, a blacksmith's wife. He declared that he is not a Muslim who is impertinent to elders. According to him, the father is the highest in rank in the family. The elder brother is *loco parentis*. All

elders should be respected. Old people require special favour. "It is a service to God to respect elders," is one of his sayings. The following three verses of the Holy Qur'ān clearly denote the duties towards parents:

"Whether one or both of them [i.e. your father or mother or both of them] attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour."<sup>28</sup>

"And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility and say: 'My Lord! bestow on them Thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.'"<sup>29</sup>

"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning."<sup>30</sup>

### (3) Divorce

Given below are the detailed reasons as permitted in Islam (Muslim Dissolution of Marriage), for which a woman can claim separation from a civil court:

(1) The whereabouts of her husband are not known since long. Different schools of Muslim thought vary in respect of the four years' period prescribed.

(2) The husband has neglected her or has failed to provide for her maintenance. All schools of Muslim thought agree on this point. Insubordination or wilful disobedience or other reprehensible behaviour of the wife can be taken into consideration in such cases. However, there are certain reasons for the waiver of these conditions, i.e. mutual compromise.

(3) The husband has been sentenced to long imprisonment and the same has become absolute, i.e. there is no appeal, revision or petition even in the

28. xvii. 23.

29. xvii. 24.

30. xxxi. 14.



supreme court.

(4) The husband has failed to perform, without reasonable cause, the marital obligations for a period of three years.

(5) He has been suffering from a disease and was so sick at the time of marriage also.

(6) The husband has been insane for a period of two years or has been suffering from leprosy or a virulent disease. Hanafī jurists do not recognise lunacy, leprosy and virulent venereal diseases as valid grounds for the dissolution of a marriage.

(7) She having been given in marriage by her father or any other guardian before she attained the age of fifteen years and repudiated the marriage before attaining the age of eighteen years provided the marriage has not been consummated. Both the Shī'ahs and Sunnis follow this rule except in the matter of age. The strict Muslim law rules that a girl should exercise the option when she has attained puberty.

(8) The husband treats her with cruelty, i.e.

(a) He habitually assaults her or makes her life miserable in any way.

(b) He associates with women of evil repute or leads a notorious life. Islam is a deadly foe of corruption. Penalty for rape is so serious that, if duly enforced, it will eliminate all evils. Adultery, prostitution or any other type of immoral behaviour, drinking, gambling or any other sinful act adopted as habit, is deeply deprecated in Islamic society.

(c) He disposes of her property or prevents her from exercising her legal rights over it. Islam is the only religion that can claim to champion the cause of womanhood. The husband cannot interfere even in her private affairs.

(d) He attempts to force her to lead an immoral life. But a woman who is of immoral character cannot have the wages of her sin in the form of a right to have the marriage dissolved; she cannot expect to be free because she is of a loose and immoral character.

(e) He obstructs her in the observance of her religious beliefs and practices.

(f) He has more than one wife and does not treat them equally in accordance with the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān. (Note.—A suit for dissolution of her marriage can be maintained at the instance of a Muslim wife if cruelty is accompanied with desertion.)

In case there is fear that the parties will not be in a position to obey the orders of the Holy Qur'ān and the parties do not wish to live as husband and wife according to principles of Islam, it is better that marriage be dissolved.

Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās says that the wife of Thābit went to the Prophet and stated that she did not like her husband and she feared that she should be guilty of the offence of hating her husband. The Prophet



asked Ḥaḍrat Thābit to take back the garden which he had given to his wife and divorce her, which he did. This clearly shows that even the wife in certain circumstances could obtain divorce at her own instance, which is termed as *Khul'*. There are specific revealed orders of God on this point. Equality is the foremost factor to be observed in polygamy. Courts take sound notice of this point.

(g) Any other ground which is recognised valid for the dissolution of marriage under Muslim law. These grounds can be "void marriages," "invalid marriages," apostasy of the husband, breach of conditions settled before marriage, inability to maintain wife.

Moreover, *'Ilā'*, *Zihār*, *Khul'* or *Mubāra'at*, and *Li'ān* can also dissolve marriage. According to these, any right which a married woman may have under Muslim law to her dower or any part thereof on the dissolution of her marriage will not be affected.

A man is prohibited from marrying: (1) his mother or grandmother howsoever high; (2) his daughter or grand-daughter howsoever low; (3) his sister whether full consanguine or uterine; (4) his niece or great niece howsoever low; (5) his aunt or great aunt howsoever high, whether paternal or maternal. A marriage with a woman prohibited by reason of consanguinity is void. Moreover, a man is prohibited from marrying: (1) his wife's mother or grandmother howsoever high; (2) his wife's daughter or grand-daughter howsoever low; (3) the wife of his father or paternal grandfather

howsoever high; and (4) the wife of his son or that of his son's son or daughter's son. However, a marriage with a woman prohibited by reason of affinity is void. In case of (2), marriage with the wife's daughter or grand-daughter is prohibited only if the marriage with the wife has been consummated. Again, marriage is prohibited by reason of fosterage except certain foster relations such as sister's foster mother, or foster sisters, mother or foster mother, or foster sisters, mother or foster son's sister or foster brother's sister with any of whom a valid marriage may be contracted. A marriage prohibited by reason of fosterage from the Islamic point of view is not at all a contract for it never creates any civil rights or obligations between the parties as the children born will be illegitimate who cannot inherit property. Although a sound knowledge of the interpretation of the Islamic code is required, the basic points are there, and we can amend according to our needs.

The Prophet of God made laws according to the needs of the country, so even now amendments can be effected according to needs but within the prescribed permission. "No man was ever more thoroughly filled with the sense of his mission or carried out that mission more heroically," is a tribute paid to the Prophet by an eminent writer, Stanley Lane-Poole, which rightly shows that non-Muslims too realise these useful reforms introduced by the Prophet of God as a great boon to society. The power of divorce is given to the husband and not to the wife. This permission, given by the Qur'ān, is a great boon to humanity. "A



house of discord is worse than Hell," says the Prophet. In Christianity and Hinduism, a man cannot ordinarily divorce his wife. Divorce is a necessary corollary of the freedom given to men and women to choose their partners. It was only during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that divorce was made legal in Roman Catholic countries in the case of Roman Catholic marriages, while the Protestants did not believe in it. The French in 1792 declared that marriage was a civil contract and that the facility in obtaining divorce was the natural consequence of the individual right of freedom which is lost if engagements are made indissoluble. The Soviet law goes even further than the French law, in granting extreme facilities for divorce where "the ground for divorce may be either the mutual consent of the parties or the desire of one of them as a ground for divorce on frivolous grounds. The Prophet openly declared: "Marry but do not divorce because God does not like men and women who relish variety in sexual pleasure." Recently, according to a news item from Athens, five thousand married persons made a representation to the Prime Minister, Field Marshal Papagou, that the divorce laws prevalent in the country needed radical change in view of the fact that, although about five to twenty years had elapsed since their separation from their wives, they could not separate themselves. The Greek law permits divorce only on grounds of insanity or physical disability. In Islam there is much wisdom in giving man alone the right of divorce, for women are more impulsive and get upset more easily than men. This is a great check

on adultery and frequent cases of divorce in Islam. Moreover, a man is bound to society and is more afraid of social ostracism than the sit-at-home woman. Islam, in addition to giving permission to man for divorce, makes ample provision for reconciliation and arbitration. In view of verse 35 of sūrah iv. of the Qur'ān, if divorce is made to be obtained from a summary court, it will not be against the spirit of the Holy Qur'ān.

In Islam, one is not permitted to marry even the sister of the divorced wife during the period of *'iddat* of one's divorced wife, she being a woman whom one could not marry in the presence of one's divorced wife.<sup>31</sup>

If a man commits adultery with a woman, he cannot marry the mother or grandmother howsoever high and daughters of that woman. Islam has placed great penalties for *zinā'*, fornication or adultery. Therefore a Muslim should not marry a woman who is leading an immoral life. But if she gives up that immoral life, there is no bar.

Woman's body was the first thing to be sold in public and is still being sold. Islam gave shelter to women in the house of those who required them to lead a pure and clean life. If prostitutes are given good homes, adultery can be stopped. We in Pakistan should give serious attention to this matter. Divorce has one evil. It gives an undesirable grip to women and they persist in making the life of men a hell on earth. The best arrangement would seem to reduce the *Mahr*

31. *Fatāwā-i-'Ālamgiri*, II, 148.



within the easy means of the husband and make him obtain divorce from a court of law, in case the wife puts undue pressure on this score. "A woman who seeks divorce from her husband without any cause will not be entitled to go to Paradise," is the behest of Islam.

In Islam there is no tax on marriages. A news item appearing in *Never Kurir* stated that there were in Vienna about 20,000 illicit marriages, i.e. couples living as man and wife without being legally married due to high marriage tax.

In order to check divorce on the pretext of infamy against good women the Qur'ān says :

"Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing, are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter, for them is a grievous penalty."<sup>32</sup>

And further, to protect them from the evil of forswearing conjugal relationship, the Qur'ān says :

"For those who take an oath for abstention from their wives, a waiting for four months is prescribed ; if then they return, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. But if their intention is firm for divorce, Allah heareth and knoweth all things."<sup>33</sup>

The principles of divorce as enunciated by the Qur'ān and the Prophet are very sound. If a man divorces his wife and then wants to take her back, he is given two chances to do so. Even if after separation and reunion, the pair cannot live amicably and a third separation has to take place, the Qur'ān imposes the restriction of *Tahlil*. According to this restriction, the

32. xxiv. 23.

33. ii. 226-227.

woman must be married to some other man, and if this new husband agrees to divorce her in due course, only then she can be married to the former husband. This is a very wise arrangement, for almost all the husbands who divorce their wives repent sooner or later. But the custom also allows three divorces at one sitting and makes *Tahlil* necessary after that. This involves great hardship to those who want a reunion after a hasty separation. Some reform in this matter or, rather, going back to the original practice in the days of the Prophet, is highly desirable. Three *Talāqs*, if given in one sitting, must be considered as one. Some of the eminent jurists like Ḥabān ibn 'Uthmān and even 'Umar II held this view. The couple must have two chances of reunion in any case. A marriage, according to the Qur'ān, is a strict bond of relation under Divine injunctions and is not to be taken as a jest. Merely in hasty action marriage should not be dissolved : for time, being a great healer, love, fondness of children and mutual repentance are bound to assert themselves in due course. A man comes to realise the awkwardness of the situation and the poor plight of children and would readily and gladly make a reconciliation. The sister of Ḥaḍrat Naufal ibn Yassār was divorced on *talāq* only being pronounced by her husband. After the period of *'iddat*, both parties were willing to compromise. The Prophet allowed them. There is no limitation or no time in this case. Maulānā Muḥammad 'Alī, in his note on verse 230 of chapter ii. of the translation of Holy Qur'ān, quotes an instance in which a woman was divorced for the first time in



the time of the Holy Prophet, a second time in the days of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar and a third time during the Khilāfat of Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān. If, after saying a divorce twice, a man is compelled to pronounce it for the third and the last time, it shows that there is no chance of the couple living happily together and that they should part for ever. Their reunion after this is practically made impossible, for when a man divorces his wife for the third and last time, he is told that it is not lawful for him to take her back again, unless and until he undergoes a moral punishment and still has a hankering for union, i.e. the divorcee must marry another person, secure divorce from him and remarry the original consort.

This clearly shows that divorce was a permission given only grudgingly and with great latitude for repentance and reconciliation, for "God's knowledge embraceth everything," says the Qur'ān and further orders that dower is also to be paid. "And if ye divorce them before consummation but after the fixation of a dower for them, then half of the dower (is due to them)." <sup>34</sup> Again, divorce is not allowed except at special times and when women are clean or at their applied term, e.g. minority of wife or pregnancy, or free from menses, or agreed period of alliance (e.g. *Muta'* marriage in Shī'ah Law). The following two verses of the Holy Qur'ān show how much regard it had even for the divorced woman when three pronouncements of divorce have been made:

"When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their

34. ii. 237.

(*'iddat*), do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands if they mutually agree on equitable terms. This instruction is for all amongst you who believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is (the course making for) most virtue and purity amongst you and Allah knows and ye know not." <sup>35</sup>

"The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child. If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. And if ye decide on a foster-mother for your offspring, then no blame on you, provided ye pay (the mother) what ye offered, on equitable terms. But fear Allah, and know that Allah sees well what ye do." <sup>36</sup>

It is all very well according to many religions to say that "none should divide whom God has united," but where there is no chance of a couple living happily together where is the sense, or expediency of continuing in wedlock, which amounts to a duress? Let them find out their own way and leave each other alone. Islam deprecates even an estrangement between husband and wife. "If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good," says the Qur'ān. <sup>37</sup> Drastic and strict divorces are against the spirit of Islam and they are losers who cannot understand Islam.

Divorce can also be effected when the wife of a Muslim, who had married him when both of them professed the Muslim faith, leaves Islam and becomes

35. ii. 232.

36. ii. 233.

37. iv. 19.



Christian, the marriage is *ipso facto* dissolved. So long as the fact of the conversion is genuine, the ulterior motive of the conversion does not effect the question (1936 LHR 666 AIR). Suit for declaration that the marriage has been dissolved after embracing Christianity. Held, conversion *ipso facto* dissolves the marriage tie (ILR 1939 Allahabad 296).

If a Muslim married a *Kitābiyah*, but she afterwards became a fire-worshipper, the marriage will be dissolved.<sup>38</sup> Apostasy from Islam of either party to a marriage operated as a complete dissolution of the marriage. In such a case the woman is free to marry another man during *'iddat*. She is justified because dissolution has come into immediate effect.

In order to stop disturbance of the peace of a married life, to save it from domestic broils and not to weaken or destroy the most endearing solace of married life, legislation in Pakistan has saved communication between husband and wife during their married life. The Pakistan Evidence Act under Section 122 lays this privilege: "No person who is or has been married shall be compelled to disclose any communication made to him during marriage or by person to whom he is or has been married, nor shall he be permitted to disclose any such communication unless the person who made it of his representative in interest consents." This clearly shows that our laws do not allow friction between wife and husband. All these steps are designed to discourage divorce and to make marriage a happy union.

38. *Fatāwā-i-'Ālamgiri*, II, 153.

### Chapter 3

## POLYGAMY IN ISLAM

In Islam marriage of one man with one woman is the general rule. But it allows, in certain circumstances, to depart from this rule. "If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice."<sup>1</sup>

Hostile critics try to make out that polygamy is an institution started by the Holy Prophet. This allegation is based on ignorance and wantonness. Polyandry and polygamy are institutions as old as human race itself. Prior to Islam both were widely practised in all parts of the world. "In Hindustan polygamy was prevalent in Vedic and post-Vedic ages. The existence of polygamy or promiscuous marriages presupposes the low status assigned to women in the earliest ages. That a man could marry as many wives as he pleased is surely an index of the backwardness of the society."<sup>2</sup>

Dr Barnett also arrives at the same conclusion and observes: "Monogamy alleviated by concubinage

1. The Holy Qur'ān, iv. 3.

2. Indra, *Status of Women in Ancient India*, p. 66.



seems to have been the general practice in Vedic times but aristocratic families were often polygamous and unashamed and the example spread. The warrior heroes had several wives, one being the Mahishi or the senior queen."<sup>3</sup>

It appears that in the time of Manu, the practice of polygamy was not held in contempt, but was treated as a privilege reserved for the twice-born classes. And in this matter a Brahman was most fortunately placed as he could keep as many as four wives, one being from his own caste and the rest from the remaining three castes. Likewise, a Kshatriya could marry three wives, one from his own caste and the rest from the remaining two castes. Similarly, a Vaishya was entitled to two wives, one belonging to the Vaishya caste and the other to the Shudra caste. A Shudra was allowed only one wife and, therefore, had to lead a monogamous life.<sup>4</sup>

Thus polygamy, the relic of barbarous times, existed also in Hindu society. Polyandry, too, existed. The five Pandava brothers had a common wife. Many of the Israelite patriarchs were polygamous and some had hundreds of wives. Solomon, the Wise, is said to have seven hundred wives in addition to three hundred concubines. Ḥaḍrat Dāwūd (peace be upon him) had ninety-nine wives. Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm, Ya'qūb and Mūsā (peace be upon them) had three or four wives each. But neither the Jews nor the Christians, nor even the Vedic Hindus and Zoroastrians prescribed limits as to the number. The Germans, up to the sixteenth

3. *Antiquities of India*, pp. 113-14.

4. Manu, III, 12.

century, enjoyed an unbridled licence. King Constantine and his successors had more than one wife. The Romans and the French practised polygamy before they came into the fold of Christianity. The Christian law of monogamy was framed by Justinian, the Roman lawgiver, who was suspected of being an atheist. In Iran, Egypt, Greece, Babylon and Austria polygamy was in vogue. The New Testament, while upholding monogamy, does not prohibit polygamy except in the case of a bishop or a deacon. Even the Christian kings practised it. Charlemagne had two wives and many concubines. Westermarck quotes a number of writers in his book, *Future of Marriage in Western Civilization*, who advocate the legalisation of polygamy on different grounds. He says :

"Dr. Cope sees no objection to voluntary polygamy or polyandry being permitted, if agreed to by all the parties. Under ordinary circumstances, he says, very few persons would be willing to make such a contract, but there are some cases of hardship which such permission would remedy. Such, for instance, would be the case where the man or woman had become the victim of a chronic disease ; or, where either party should be childless, and in other contingencies which can be imagined. For the most part, he adds, the best way to deal with polygamy is to let it alone. So also, according to Mr. Southern, the preference that most people give to monogamy is no reason why the state should enforce it. So far as other forms of marriage can be practised by mutual consent, and without detrimentally affecting children, the state hasn't the ghost of a right to veto them. Dr. Norman Haire, who maintains that legalised polygamy would offer many advantages to the majority of people, argues that if the children are supported by the state, there need be no limit to the number of legal mates. Professor Dunlop thinks it may well be that certain individuals cannot



attain complete satisfaction in monogamy, but may reach a highly satisfying adaptation in polygamous marriage, and that the system of the future will leave individuals free to form whatever types of matrimonial alliances are most advantageous to them. . . . In France, Dr. Le Bon has predicted that European legislation in the future will recognize polygamy. . . . A return to polygamy, the natural relationship between the sexes, would remedy many evils : prostitution, venereal diseases, abortion, the misery of illegitimate children, the misfortune of millions of unmarried women, resulting from disproportion between the sexes, adultery, and even jealousy, since the disregarded wife would find consolation in her cognizance of not being secretly deceived by her husband. . . . A radical champion of polygamy is Professor Christian von Ehrenfels; who regards it as necessary for the preservation of the Aryan race. . . . In Persia, according to Colonel Macgregor, only two per cent have a plurality of wives. In Pakistan and India the percentage is not higher. He further admits that the man's taste for variety in sex experience is more intense than the woman's and this has led to the often repeated view that he is instinctively polygamous."

The Arab social fabric was passing through a serious crisis at the advent of Islam. Inter-tribal wars had destroyed a large part of the male population of Arabia. It was after the battle of Uhud in which a large number of Muslims were slain that Islam allowed polygamy. Thousands of women were left without any male supporters who flocked to the harem of anyone who could support them. Taking advantage of this, the rich people began to take a very large number of women, specially young orphan girls, in their harems as wives, and thus remedial measures had to be taken.

Under the laws of Rome, the son and the wife were used not as a person but as a thing in the family of

the Pater over whom the latter exercised absolute jurisdiction of life and death. The position of woman was that of a mistress. In Greece, the wife looked after and performed menial offices.

Thus the situation all over the world was pretty dismal. Islam is the culmination of all religious evolutions. The quintessence of its teaching is the equality of all homosapiens, be they men or women. There is the same human soul in a woman as in a man. Was, therefore, a woman to be treated as an accessory to a man's lust with no integral worth of her own? What is a woman's status? Is she or is she not more than a chattel?

The Islamic conception of marriage is fundamentally different from the conceptions of other religions. Marriage in Islam, as already explained, is a contract. The basic rule always is the voluntary association. No woman can be married against her will. She must, of her own accord, agree to join the matrimonial union. The Qādī cannot perform a legal marriage without the verbal sanction of the bride or through her *Vakils*, as already described.

Islam does not enjoin polygamy, but gives it just a legal status. It does not detract from a man's character if he contents himself with one wife, notwithstanding his financial competence to marry more. On the other hand, it is not in the least objectionable if a woman refused to marry a man who already has a wife. She may never agree to be a second wife even to an emperor. No law can legalise a forcible marriage. All contracts in such cases are void.



Islam does not disrupt monogamous life. It only helps mankind to mitigate the evils enforced by eternal monogamy. Monogamous Europe has created more problems for mankind than it has solved. What to do with women who cannot find husbands? Are they to be let loose with their charms to disrupt and outrage the happiness of contented homes? Surplus women being a menace to society, Islam has successfully tackled a formidable problem confronting Europe today.

A very large number of women left destitute and exposed to prostitution had to be provided for. To meet this obvious necessity the Prophet permitted a limited polygamy. If Europe had followed the lead of Islam, all the destitute and helpless women roaming the streets would become members of decent families, and prostitution and immorality would be a thing of the past. As it is, the enormous number of unmarried women and their deplorable condition is causing much anxiety and alarm to the Western nations.

The Prophet did not initiate but restricted polygamy by imposing a check on the number of wives.

Marriage with two sisters was forbidden because of the natural affection between the two which would be torn asunder and destroy the harmony of sweet relations of sisterly love. Woman was ordered to marry one man to conserve purity of blood and saddle the husband with the responsibility of maintenance, since woman alone and single-handed cannot cope with the burden. The marriage laws of Islam have the healthy effect of providing homes for the homeless and saving

a large number of helpless females from prostitution and immorality and of preventing the well-to-do from having as many free women as wives as they liked. George Sale, in his commentary on verse 3 of Chapter iv. of the Holy Qur'ān, has rightly remarked: "When this verse was sent down from heaven the greater part of the Arabs had each of them eight to ten wives, and they often treated them badly."

After the restrictive injunction the believers retained four and discarded the surplus for better protection of their rights. Further, the Qur'ān prescribed the law how to treat the first wife in case a second wife is taken. It says:

"But if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, take not the least bit of it back. Would ye take it by slander and a manifest wrong?"<sup>5</sup>

Polygamy was a rooted custom in Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) restrained it within narrow limits. He did not himself practise it up to the age of fifty, but when his mission demanded he married more wives. Through the Prophet's wives in Arabia women came to know what Islam was (as envisaged by the daily life of the Prophet). Polygamy thus helped the Prophet to preach Islam. Regarding equality of status, *vis-a-vis* husband and wife, the Holy Qur'ān is sufficiently pointing:

"If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves and such settlement is best; even



though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if ye do good and practise self-restraint, Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do." 6

*definitely!*  
Polygamy is a blessing to childless parents. Sometimes a second marriage becomes a necessity for the husband, for want of children or illness of the wife. Biologically weak and more exposed to disease than men, many women lose their health. In that case, a man by marrying a second wife not only saves the declining health of his first wife but also keeps himself away from fornication and adultery because marriage, as described by Hadrat 'Umar, is a strong weapon against *zinā*. The sickly woman, instead of being discarded, retains her home, receives good attention and is maintained in her status as a wife. If a man is healthier than his wife, society should allow him to lead the sexual life of a legitimate character. A social system which does not permit polygamy in such circumstances will be constantly threatened with moral corruption. Moreover, regarding the chastity of morals, the Prophet of God openly declared: "The adultery of the eye is to look with an eye of lust at the wife of another and the adultery of the tongue is to utter what is forbidden. I swear by God, there is nothing which God so condemns as His male and female servants committing adultery."

The Qur'ān says:

"The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication, — flog each of them with a hundred stripes: let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah, if ye

believe in Allah and the Last Day; and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment." 7

Let alone adultery, Islam strongly condemns sexual scandal.

In Christian society when connubial relations are strained the husband simply deserts his wife; and since he cannot marry another wife, he cohabits with some prostitute or immoral woman without matrimony. The offspring are illegal, cursed by society and by law. The first wife, during her illness, loses the husband and his support. If he was allowed to marry another wife, the first wife would only lose a part of her conjugal rights, which she no more requires, but retain her status and the support and care of her husband and her children, with due share in the matter of inheritance. From a permanently sick woman's point of view, it is better that her husband marries another wife openly, instead of gallivanting about. The desire of a male issue certainly induces a man to marry another woman, when one is not blessed for some reason with a heir. In majority of cases an average Muslim spends his life with one wife. A wise writer has rightly observed: "Monogamy is the food which sustains society; polygamy is the medicine of the disease of society." Islam does not give an open licence for marriages. The Qur'ān takes full cognizance of the state of human nature and the weakness of human beings. It openly declares:

"Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire but turn not away (from a



woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging in the air. If ye come to a friendly understanding and practise self-restraint, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." 8

The study of history reveals the fact that war mania is the besetting voice of humanity, and increase in the number of women in society is a direct consequence of this vice. Polygamy is the only remedy against its evils. The number of women after the two world wars has increased so much that even a rich country like America is not able to cope with the situation.

The conditional clause on marrying another wife enjoining justice and limiting the number of wives is particularly noteworthy. It reminds us of the immediate occasion for the promulgation of this verse, i.e. the battle of Uhud, when the Muslim community was left with many orphans and widows, hence the concern for orphans and widows brought God's commands for the emancipation of women.

The Holy Qur'an reviews the human faith and increases ethical standards of society. Islam gave the new converts spiritual elevation and a set form of life. It solved the day-to-day problems, social, political and domestic, and led them towards righteousness and piety. "The unrestricted number of wives of the 'Times of Ignorance,'" says A. Yusuf Ali, "was now strictly limited to a maximum of four, provided you could treat them with perfect equality, in material things as well as in affection and immaterial things. As this condition is most difficult to fulfil,

I understand the recommendation to be towards monogamy." 9 This passage permits polygamy under certain circumstances: it does not enjoin it, nor even permits it unconditionally. It may be noted here that the explanation of this passage as generally understood is based on a report contained in the *Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim*, according to which Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah understood this verse to mean that if the guardians of orphan girls feared that by marrying them they would not be able to do justice to them, they should discard alliance. This explanation, even if the report be taken to be authentic, required the insertion into the passage of a number of words which the original does not contain, and as the meaning is much more clear, and more in consonance with the context without the addition of these words, the interpretation given below is preferable. It is admitted that this chapter of the Holy Qur'an was revealed to guide the Muslims under conditions which followed the battle of Uhud, and the last portion of the previous chapter deals with that battle. Now in that battle seven men out of seven hundred Muslims had been slain, and this decimation had largely decreased the number of males, who, being the bread-winners, were the natural guardians and supporters of the females. The number was likely to suffer a still greater diminution in the battles which had yet to be fought, while the number of women would be increased by the addition of the prisoners of war. Thus many orphans would be left in the

9. *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation & Commentary*, p. 179, footnote 509.



charge of widows, who would find it difficult to procure the necessary means of support. Hence in the first verse of this chapter the Muslims are enjoined to respect the ties of relationship, and as they all came from a single ancestor, a breadth is introduced in the idea of relationship, inasmuch as they are told that they are all in fact related to each other. In the second verse the care of orphans is particularly enjoined. In the third verse we are told that if they could not do justice to the orphans, they might marry the widows whose children would thus become their own children, and as the number of women was now much greater than the number of men, they were permitted to marry even two, or three, or four women. It would thus appear that the permission to have more than one wife was given under the peculiar circumstances of the Muslim society then existing, and the Prophet's action in marrying widows, as well as the example of many of his Companions, corroborates this statement. Marriage with orphan girls is also sanctioned in this passage, for there were the same difficulties in the case of orphan girls as in the case of widows, and the words have a general application.

The modern society calls polygamy an evil: but it fails to note that it is the only practical safeguard against so many evils. Dr Annie Besant writes:

"There is pretended monogamy in the West, but in reality polygamy without responsibility. The mistress is cast off when the man is weary of her and she sinks gradually to be the woman of the street: for the lover has no responsibility for her future: and she is a hundred times worse off than a sheltered wife and mother in the polygamous home. When we see thousands of

miserable women who crowd the streets of the Western towns at night, we cannot realise the hollowness of the Western reproach against the polygamy of Islam. It is better for a woman, happier for a woman, more respectable for a woman, to be consorted to by one man only with a legitimate child in her arms and surrounded with respect, than to be cast out in the streets perhaps with an illegitimate child, outside the pale of law, unsheltered after night, rendered incapable of motherhood, despised by all."

All women can get husbands in Europe if polygamy is allowed there. The world is apt to believe, as admitted even by hostile writers like Miss Nabia Abbott, Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Chicago, that even "monogamous society at its worst is not free from prostitutes or the kept mistress or the proverbial 'cat and dog' family life."

In olden days, in Arabia, polygamy had another beneficial purpose among the tribes. The power and influence of a tribe depended on the number of its members. Polygamy was a means to increase the number of members of a tribe. The most numerous tribe had the greatest power and the most numerous family had the highest regard within the tribe. A man with several male children was considered to be powerful in the tribe and was also respected by others. More male children meant more swords to support the father.

The study of Islamic history reveals that polygamy came into existence simply to save women from destruction. The Prophet of Islam knew that a man generally goes out for business, trade and other expeditions for long periods and, in order to get rid of the monotony of life, he may like variety in sexual rela-

Is this why we married daughters  
1st fl. figure



tions. In order to save him from the great sin of *zinā*, he allowed polygamy for such people, thereby discouraging adultery and secret marriages outside the sphere of Islam, which was a curse to social life.

In his book, *The Case for Polygamy*, Clare McFarlane writes :

"Whether the question is considered socially, ethically or religiously, it can be demonstrated that polygamy is not contrary to the highest standard of civilization. The suggestion offers a practical remedy for the Western problems of the destitute and the unwanted female. The alternative is continued and increased prostitution, concubinage and distressing spinsterhood."

Restricted polygamy is not bad by itself, and in the light of the opinion of Dr Annie Besant, the famous woman thinker of the twentieth century, and McFarlane, "it is a beneficial institution which can save womanhood from destitution and prostitution." The *Census Report of India* for the year 1931 (I, 215) regarding polygamy indicates a very low rate of eight co-wives to every thousand wives in a population of some thirty crores. The *Report* further says that polygamy is not widely practised in India among either Muslims or Hindus.

Diwan Urat, after quoting a number of verses from the Bible in support of polygamy, says that plurality of wives is not only laudable but a downright blessing. Similarly, Pope Filax and John Milton and Azzac Tailor, have been supporting polygamy.

But the attitude of the Christian missionaries (outside India and Pakistan) towards Muslims has always been hostile, so they condemn polygamy severely. At

the same time, there are brilliant exceptions. Leonard, an eminent writer, has opined : "If ever man on this earth found God, if ever man devoted his life to God's service with a good and great motive, it is certain that the Prophet of Arabia was that man." Recently, in January 1960, Justice Dhavan of Allahabad made the following observations while dismissing a Muslim husband's appeal against the decision of the lower court in a suit touching polygamy under Muslim Law.

The judgment said that under prevailing social conditions in India the very act of a Muslim husband taking a second wife during the subsistence of the first marriage would raise a presumption of cruelty to the first wife laying onus on the husband, to explain his action and prove that his conduct involved no insult or cruelty to the first wife. He described Muslim husband's desire to have consortium of two wives or more simultaneously as "conjugal greed". Muslim law, as enforced in India, had considered polygamy to be an institution to be tolerated but not encouraged. The Qur'ān, His Lordship opined, sanctioned polygamy as a restrictive injunction limiting the number of wives and imposing ceiling on conjugal greed which prevailed among males on an extensive scale.

Mr Justice Dhavan added that the Qur'ān has not conferred upon a husband any fundamental right to compel the first wife to share her husband's consortium with another woman in all circumstances. He said that a Muslim husband had legal right to take a second wife even while his first marriage subsisted : but if he



did so and then sought assistance of the civil court to compel the first wife to live with him against her wishes and on pain of imprisonment, she was entitled to raise the question whether the court, as a court of equity, ought to compel her to submit to cohabitation with such a husband.

He dismissed the appeal against the decision of the District Judge, restituting conjugal rights against his first wife who had refused to return to him because he had taken a second wife and also because she accused him of cruelty to her.

In order to raise the prestige of woman the Holy Qur'ān allows a Muslim's marriage with a slave-girl if he cannot afford to marry in a high family :

"If any of you have not the means to wed free believing women, they may wed believing girls from among those your right hands possess."<sup>10</sup>

Because later it is said : "And in no wise covet those things in which Allah hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others."<sup>11</sup>

A study of these pages clearly shows that the uprooted woman had the right to live honourably with one who promoted the right. "Some marriages [of the Prophet] show the policy of conciliating the hands of rival factions, yet it was not a sensual motive,"<sup>12</sup> is the admission of a great writer.

10. iv. 25.

12. S. Lane-Poole, *Studies In A Mosque*, p. 78.

11. iv. 32.

## Chapter 4

### PURDAH

We now turn to the vexed question of veil and seclusion, which has created controversies since long and is still a subject of debate. Seclusion is based on the Holy Qur'ān's verse :

"(O Consorts of the Prophet) stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance."<sup>1</sup>

The first part of the verse deals with home abiding. It does not mean that Muslim women should never go out of their houses. The Qur'ān encourages travelling and directs acquiring of knowledge "from cradle to the grave" and orders to travel "east to west" for this purpose. The advice of verse 11 of Chapter vi. of the Qur'ān :

"Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth !"

is meant both for man and woman. In other opposite meaning a woman is ordered even to go to Hajj which is a Divine command both for men and women. Subject to certain restrictions in respect of outdoor dress, Muslim women are in every other respect free to move about as men, although they have to do so in strict decency.

1. xxxiii. 33.



The history of Islam reveals that the Prophet used to take with him one of his wives whenever he went on expeditions. If the order to stay at home was absolute, the most scholarly wife of the Prophet, Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah, would not have travelled as far as Baṣrah. Women are allowed to move about and to take part in wars. Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah and Umm Salīm helped the Muslim warriors in wars against unbelievers.

Women with swords in hand defended the Prophet. Women thus had full liberty of freedom to take part in national activities. The second part of the verse quoted above says that, in pre-Islamic days, Arab women went around unveiled and appeared in public wearing improper dress and jewels to attract men. According to the historian Fakihi, the citizens of Mecca used to dress their unmarried daughters in all their finery and paraded them unveiled in order to attract possible suitors. Islam put a stop to all these unhealthy and degrading practices and women were enjoined not to expose their charms to the gaze of men. This they could easily do by putting an outer covering or a veil over their bodies, or, in other words, they were told that whenever they had to get out of their houses they must put on a veil or an outer garment over their bodies. This, to all appearance, seems to be the original notion of *pardah* and it certainly does not entail any hardship on Muslim women, nor can it be argued that it ordained total prohibition of the movement of women when going out. The words ordering veil in the Qur'ān are significant. "That is most convenient that they should be known (as

such) and not molested"<sup>2</sup>—was an order of the day as unveiled women were molested by unbelievers who pleaded that they mistook those ladies for slave-girls. Hence Muslim women were ordered to put on veil while going out. This verse ends with the words: "known and not molested" signifying its real object. Chapter xxiv. of the Qur'ān, which was revealed earlier, in its verses 30-31, orders men and believing women, to "lower their gaze" which clearly shows that if women are covered from head to foot, none can stare at them. Moreover, there is a saying of the Prophet: "The first glance or look is for you, the second is against you, i.e. no wrong on your part if you happen to behold a woman, but you will certainly offend if you try to have a second look at her." Similarly, once Ḥaḍrat 'Umar objected to Sawdah, a wife of the Apostle, coming out of her house for some legitimate need. The Prophet remarked: "Women are permitted to go out for satisfying their urgent requirements."

Thus it can easily be concluded from the Qur'ānic injunctions that there is no mention of covering of head or hands while observing *pardah*. Although in the Pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy precincts of the Ka'bah and on the Mount 'Arafāt, women go about with their hands and faces uncovered. At the same time, however, there is no room for mixed gatherings in Muslim society. Women must meet and sit apart from men. The mixing up of boys and girls, which some people think essential for education, is really spoiling the youth. Separate institutions can alone give girls



the chance of free thinking and advancement in society. It is indeed against the spirit of the teachings of Islam. We should not encourage free mixing of the two sexes in social and state functions. There are no instances in Islamic history to show that, in early Islam, there were any mixed social, political or religious gatherings. Even in mosques women used to sit behind the rows of men, and at the end of the morning prayer, wrapping themselves, they used to leave quietly before the departure of men. Ladies were forbidden to walk in the centre of the road, or to form a separate group. They were not allowed to stand shoulder to shoulder with men under orders of the Prophet. Co-education, cinema halls, dances and skating rings have been infused in Pakistan society through Western civilisation to curb Islamic culture. In bazars even today, the passersby tease the girls. In Mughal days also the ladies used to say their prayers apart from men. The earlier a campaign is launched to wipe out this evil, the better it will be.

In practice women were not secluded in the days of the Pious Caliphs as also in the days of the Umayyads. Seclusion is essentially a Persian custom and is foreign to Arabia. In the early days of Islam women regularly attended the daily prayers in the mosques and all the books of *Fiqh* allow them to do so, except in the days of *fitnah* (rebellion or disorder). According to Syed Ameer Ali (*The Spirit of Islam*) the *burqa* is an innovation of the Iranian aristocracy which influenced the conquerors as well as the neighbouring countries.

A *ḥadīth* quoted by Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah says that one

day Asmā', her elder (married) sister, visited her wearing fine clothes. The Prophet turning his face aside said: "O Asmā', when a woman comes of age it is not proper for her that any part of her body should be seen except this..." and the Prophet pointed towards his face and hands. Similarly, Ruzīnah, a young niece of Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah, one day came to her and the Prophet again turned away his face and said that when a girl attains puberty it is not lawful for her to display any part of her body except hands. This clearly shows that the head should not be left uncovered.

The present veil is based on an interpretation of the following verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Scholars differ in the interpretation of the Qur'ānic injunctions on the subject:

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them. And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do."<sup>3</sup>

From this injunction it appears further that there is no restriction on women going out when necessary, for if women were totally forbidden to go out of their houses men would not have been asked to lower their gaze. In fact, the Holy Qur'ān requires both men and women to keep their eyes down so that when they meet each other, neither should stare at each other. Similarly, the Holy Qur'ān enjoins upon women:

"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily)



appear thereof: that they should draw their veils over their bosoms (*Juyūbs*) and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs (eunuchs), or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments (i.e. anklets). . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Some scholars, as stated above, take their stand on the words "except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof" and say that the external parts of the body here exempted are the face and the hands which need not be covered by believing women when they go out. Only women of age are exempted from such *pardah*. "Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage,—there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty: but it is best for them to be modest: and Allah is One Who sees and knows all things."<sup>5</sup>

Not only for women generally but even for the Prophet's own household the Qur'ānic injunction is:

"O Prophet! tell thy wives and thy daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."<sup>6</sup>

These verses presume the permission for women to go out, for if they do not go out, where is the need to instruct men and women to follow certain precautions?

Then, in the matter of covering the body, the Qur'ān orders that the opening at the bosom (*Juyūb*) of their chemises which sometimes expose the breast should be covered with their hand. According to Qaffāl, the meaning of the words is "except that which a person discloses usually" and in the case of a woman this usually means clothes which a woman might be wearing. Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah are of opinion that it means eye-paint, signets and hand-paint. Ibn 'Umar says: "what appears thereof" means face, hands and signet, because he is of opinion that women are forced to uncover these parts. If they do not uncover their hands, they cannot buy or sell; if they do not expose their faces, they cannot act as witnesses, nor seek the hand of any man in marriage; if they do not uncover their feet, they can hardly go about for their necessities. Among the latter authorities 'Aṭā', Auzā'i, Ibrāhīm Nakha'i, 'Ikrimah and Daḥḥāk agree that "what appears thereof" has reference to hands, feet and face. Among the famous jurists of Islam, Imām Mālik says that the entire body of a woman is included in *satr* (i.e. parts which should be kept fully covered) except hands and face. Imām Shāfi'i also makes an exception in favour of face and hands. Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal says that the entire body of a woman should be kept fully covered except the face. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, the most widely accepted authority on Muslim jurisprudence, says that it is not lawful for a stranger to see any part of a woman's body, but he can see her face and hands. According to Imām Abū Yūsuf, in addition to the face and hands, the wrists



of a woman may also be lawfully seen. Thus a woman when going out should cover herself by an external wrapper or over-garment, it being permissible to leave the hands and face uncovered. The exposure of such parts as the neck, the bosom or the arms is forbidden, as also the display of decorations, whether in the form of ornaments or dress.

There are other restrictions in the Holy Qur'ān, e.g. in Chapter al-Nūr (xxiv.) where it is laid down that Muslims should not enter the house of another without prior permission :

"O ye who believe! enter not houses other than your own until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them : that is best for you, in order that ye may heed (what is seemly)."<sup>7</sup>

Further it adds :

"And if ye find no one in the house, enter not until permission is given to you : if ye are asked to go back, go back : that makes for greater purity for yourselves : and Allah knows well all that ye do."<sup>8</sup>

Even the boys when grown up are enjoined in similar terms in the same chapter :

"But when the children among you come of age, let them (also) ask for permission, as do those senior to them (in age) : thus does Allah make clear His signs to you : for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom."<sup>9</sup>

To women also the Qur'ān in the same chapter advises :

"...and that they should not strike their feet (in walking) in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And

7. xxiv. 27.

8. xxiv. 28.

9. xxiv. 59.

O ye Believers, turn ye all together towards Allah that ye may attain Bliss."<sup>10</sup>

And finally in Sūrah xxv. the Qur'ān says :

"And the Servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility."<sup>11</sup>

Thus in the light of the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān regarding *purdah*, women should come forward with pure Islamic spirit, quitting the Western mode of life and following the recognised principles of Islamic *purdah* and then they can achieve their goal which will enhance their social, economic and cultural status in society.

10. xxiv. 31.

11. xxv. 63.



## Chapter 5

### MOTHERS OF THE FAITHFUL

#### 1. KHADĪJAH

(peace be upon her)

"Women may be married on the strength of four qualifications: wealth, beauty, pedigree and piety. Look out for a woman with these virtues. If you marry from any other consideration, your hands would be rubbed in dust..." (Muḥammad [peace be upon him]).

Khadijah, formerly known as "Ṭāhirah" or the pure, was the daughter of Khuwaylid b. Asad, and her mother, Fāṭimah bint Zā'idah, came of a noble and prosperous Quraysh family. She was born in 556 C.E. From her earliest, Khadijah was well known among the people of her tribe for her great gifts both of person and character. Her father who was a successful business man and a chief of his family, had left her a large fortune. She had been married to Abū Hālah b. Zurārah of the Banū Tamīm and was mother of two sons, i.e. Hālah and Hind. In Arabia boys were named as girls to ward off the evil eye. Hind died in the Battle of al-Jamal, fighting on the side of 'Alī. Khadijah was also called "Umm Hind". After the death of her first husband, she was married to 'Atīq b. 'Ā'idh Makhzūmī who, too pre-

deceased her. She had a daughter from him who was named Hindah.<sup>1</sup>

Khadijah was a pious widow who led a devout life. When she was free from domestic chores she would repair to the Ka'bah to offer her prayers. Nobles besieged her with proposals for marriage, but she waived them aside, having been marked out by destiny to glorify the annals of Islam by becoming the consort of the Prophet of Allah, "the best of creation," and acquiring the privileged position of being the first "Mother of the Faithful".

The death of her father in the Battle of Fijār had posed a serious problem for Khadijah. There being none to look after the business affairs of the family, she stood in dire need of the services of a sagacious and straightforward honest man to manage her large commercial concern. Muḥammad, hardly twenty-two years of age, was recommended as a suitable choice by several prominent members of the Meccan community. Being an extremely righteous and conscientious man of the day, people called him *al-Amīn*, the Trustworthy. He commanded high respectability and enjoyed complete confidence of his community.

After much coaxing Khadijah secured his services with the concurrence of his uncle Abū Ṭālib. The terms of business were the same as were in vogue among the Meccans. The working partner got

1. According to Ibn Hishām (*Sīrat*, IV, 193) and Ṭabarī (*Tarīkh*, III, 175, and *Simt*, p. 13), Khadijah married 'Atīq b. 'Ā'idh first and then Abū Hālah.



one-half of the profits and the sleeping partner, who contributed the capital, the other half.

Although Muḥammad had little business experience, he showed remarkable aptitude for the job, and, by the grace of God, his very first expedition to Syria was crowned with glorious success, so much so that in certain barter deals in Syria he doubled the market value of goods at Mecca. Muḥammad was accompanied by Khadijah's slave, Maysarah. On their way to Syria they met Naṣṭūr, a *Rāhib*, who, after a cursory glance at his physiognomy, declared that Muḥammad had in him the signs, given in ancient books, of the last Prophet of God. He told Maysarah that his distinguished companion was the promised Prophet of God.

His first commercial venture was a prelude to subsequent undertakings of an equally fruitful nature and the future Prophet of God fully justified the trust reposed in him.

Khadijah prospered as a result of the wise disposition of her business affairs by her youthful partner and his noble behaviour won the lady's admiration which developed into a deeper affection with the passage of time. Once, when Muḥammad was on his way back home, Khadijah, looking out of her window, noticed that birds were hovering over his head to shield him from the scorching sun. The slave Maysarah, too, was full of praise for the youth's noble behaviour, and manifestation of Divine grace in course of their peregrinations. Impressed by these auspices as well as by his indubitable piety and good behaviour, she made

overtures for marriage which Muḥammad received with prudent silence. Her message to him ran as follows: "I desire to enter into matrimony with you because of our blood-relationship and the undoubted nobility of your descent, truthfulness and sincerity as well as the integrity of your character and the sobriety of your views." This message was a sequel to her dream of the previous night wherein she had seen that the sun dropped like a disk in her house, illuminating the entire Mecca with its brightness. She consulted astrologers who informed her of her impending marriage with a great luminary. The social customs of those days gave a freer hand to women in matters matrimonial and Khadijah fully availed herself of this privilege. In this particular case, Nafisah, Khadijah's trusted maid, played the role of a match-maker and won the approbation of the tribe. But Muḥammad, who was an extremely shy youth, was at first hesitant to espouse a lady of such eminence. And it was only after prolonged deliberations and full consultation of the elders of his family that he acceded to the proposal. Khadijah had plenty of wealth, but what had the future Prophet of God to do with riches! The sole consideration weighing with him was her good opinion of him and her implicit faith in his integrity and trustworthiness.

At last, the wedding was fixed, and the leading citizens of Mecca assembled to celebrate the occasion, for Khadijah was the greatest woman among the Quraysh both as regards the nobility of her character and her opulence, and Muḥammad, for all his poverty, was the



grandson of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib, the acknowledged leader of the tribe.

When the leaders of the Quraysh assembled at Khadījah's house, Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of Muḥammad, stood up and addressed the audience as follows: "Praise be to God Who made us the posterity of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl, Who gave us this sacred land, Who has established us as the guardians of the house of Pilgrimage and as the judges of men! Muḥammad, my nephew, has admiration for Khadījah and so has Khadījah for him; therefore, I unite them together as husband and wife. I further declare that whatever be the dower for the solemnisation of this marriage, I undertake to be responsible therefor. I further proclaim by God that henceforth he is to achieve greatness amongst us." Khadījah's guardian was her uncle 'Umar b. Asad. The dower was fixed at 500 dirhams which was paid later on by the Prophet from the sale proceeds of his twenty camels.

About this marriage H.G. Wells says: "The man Muhammad who fired this Arab flame appears first in the history as the young husband of the widow of a rich merchant of the town of Mecca."

The marriage took place amid great rejoicings. Halīmah who had suckled the Prophet in childhood also participated and Khadījah presented her 100 dīnārs as gift being a "mother". To Muḥammad this marriage brought freedom from daily stint, sorely needed by him to prepare for the great work ahead. In addition, it gave him a loving woman's heart who was, later on, to be the first convert to the faith he was

ordained to preach. She was ever ready to console him in his moments of trial and travail, keeping alight the flickering flame of home when there were few to believe him and the world appeared dark before his eyes.

Physiologically, a woman plays an important role in sustaining her husband through the turmoils of life which Muḥammad, as evangelist of a new faith, faced in an overwhelming degree, and Khadījah seemed to have been out for this role.

They were a very happy couple, and never a domestic tiff marred the harmony of their conjugal life. When a famine broke out, they spent lavishly to alleviate the distress of the poor. At the same time, however, the husband did not neglect their business interests which continued to prosper under his watchful care. He was a painstaking worker and a devoted husband. This marriage gave Khadījah the greatest happiness and, till her death, which took place twenty-five years after their marriage, she never regretted having espoused a poor man from the Banū Hāshim. People declared that in the annals of Mecca there was no happier couple than the elderly Khadījah and the youthful Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

Khadījah adored her great husband and placed all her wealth at his disposal, bringing up graciously her children. She not only took part in all his joys (which were few) but also shared his sorrows and afflictions with the solicitude of a faithful wife. She brought everything to Muḥammad, i.e. wealth, pres-



tige, influence and, finally, freedom from want. He always remembered these pre-prophetic days of his life as he was free from all care and enjoyed unlimited leisure. In his later years he counted these days among the happiest of his life. He carried on his commercial deals in all Arab countries and won great reputation as an honest and fair-dealing man.

But as he approached his fortieth year, he concentrated more and more on spiritual meditation, to the exclusion of mundane affairs. He grew painfully aware about the life the people lived. He was fast becoming a "salient" soul. He would retire to a cave in Mount Hira' and spend long hours in meditation in its quiet stillness. He used to keep fasts as a means of spiritual exaltation and communion with God—a philosophy typified in the month of Ramaḍān as in this month revelation started coming.

Thus at the age of forty, Muḥammad was altogether a changed man. He was silent, self-absorbed, rapt in contemplation and pondering over the evils of the society around him. He shrank from frivolities and kept strictly aloof from common society. His mind dwelt on the futility of idol-worship, the insensate folly of bowing to figures of flint, incapable of sensation or emotion. What power could these lifeless dummies have over the fortunes of those who idolised them? He never ceased to deprecate the folly of those who neglected the true God, the Omniscient and Omnipotent Architect of the universe, the Cherisher and Sustainer of all lives.

One day while sitting in the cave he heard a voice

saying: "Know, I am Angel Gabriel sent by the Almighty (God) to proclaim that He has appointed thee as His messenger to the people. Tell them there is only one God." Then the Angel initiated him into the mysteries of Divine lore in the following words: "Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: proclaim! and thy Lord is Most Bountiful,—He Who taught (the use of) the Pen,—taught man that which he knew not."<sup>2</sup> He then asked the Prophet to repeat the words just uttered, but the latter only uttered and stumbled, pleading his illiteracy as an excuse. Thereupon the Angel held out his arms and hugged him hard to his bosom. In a twinkling, Muḥammad's heart brimmed with literacy and Divine lore, and he recited the verses with the fluency of an erudite scholar. This untaught Prophet, later on, became the leader and pioneer of the moral and spiritual renaissance of Arabia.

Flabbergasted at this strange happening, Muḥammad rushed to Khadijah, shaking in every limb. "What is the matter?" inquired the anxious lady. With much trepidation and after considerable humming and heaving, he described the mysterious incident with its spine-chilling sensation, soliciting the good lady's advice. Indeed, he found himself in a strange fix. If he proclaimed the news to the people and took them into confidence regarding this mysterious happening, they would scoff at him and call him a loony or an impostor, which would not do for



him as the lion of his community. As he sat absorbed in these reflections he was once again seized with a fit of shivering. He called out to Khadijah, begging her to cover him up with some cloth. Simultaneously, the revealed words gushed forth from his lips :

"O thou wrapped up (in a mantle) ! arise and deliver thy warning ! And thy Lord do thou magnify ! And thy garments keep free from stain ! And all abomination shun ! Nor expect, in giving, any increase (for thyself) ! But for thy Lord's (Cause), be patient and constant."<sup>3</sup>

After this soul-stirring event, he had no option but to embark on his mission. Khadijah listened to the whole story with deep interest and said : "Nay, I call Allah to witness that He will never bring thee to disgrace for thou unitest the ties of relationship and bearest the burden of the weak and art solicitous for the destitute and honourest thy guests and helpest those in real distress." These encouraging words of the noble lady brought great consolation to his heart. Indeed, Khadijah was so worked up with emotion that she could not compose herself to sleep but kept tossing and numbling prayers all through the night.

The next day she went to Waraqah b. Nawfal, a great scholar of Christian and Jewish scriptures, and gave a detailed account of Muhammad's supernatural incident. Her joy knew no bound when the great scholar assured her that her husband was ordained by God to be His Messenger and founder of a new and great religion. He expressed his yearning for being a witness to the day when her great husband would be

3. lxxiv. 1-7.

asked to embark on his mission and quit the city of Mecca, and to see for himself, because all messengers who brought such missions were not free from persecution. He lived to see his dream come true when on the proclamation of the Prophet's mission, the pleasure to testify that "light and salvation was coming for the future world". The scholar told Khadijah that the heavenly messenger who had come to Moses of old came now to Muhammad, her husband.

So on her return home, Khadijah declared her faith in the divineness of his mission, thus gaining the honour of being the first convert to the faith of Islam and the first to forswear the idolatrous creed of her forefathers.

It was the insistent call of the Angel on the one hand and the persistent support and encouragement from his wife Khadijah on the other that sustained greatly the noble Prophet in his role as an evangelist of the faith. The Almighty constantly reminded him of His favour to him saying : "Who exalted thy name?" to make him realise the imperative character of his role. Although these admonitions may not appear to have any significance at the time, later on history has testified to their epic importance. Now five times in a day (at prayer times) from all corners of the world the name of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is called as the messenger of God, and even God says : "Verily, God himself and all Angels send *salāms* to his Prophet ; O Believers ! send *salāms* to the Prophet and wish God's Blessings for Him."<sup>4</sup>

4. xxxiii. 56.



When the number of converts rose to forty, he went to the Ka'bah and declared: "The inspiration has come to me that your God is One God."<sup>5</sup> The first shibboleth makes the clarion announcement: "There is no other deity but Allah," to Whom all allegiance is due. What a simple message, ridding man of all shackles of slavery and domination of man over man. But to the idolaters of Mecca, it was a challenge to their age-long faith. They were frantic with rage. Ḥaḍrat Ḥārith tried to save the Apostle when attacked while preaching, but was killed on the spot and got the honour of being the first martyr of Islam. God constantly came forward with reassuring messages and sent many revelations to support the Prophet. One of these was as follows:

"By the Glorious Morning Light, and by the Night when it is still,— thy Guardian—Lord hath not forsaken thee, nor is He displeased. And verily the hereafter will be better for thee than the present."<sup>6</sup>

Events have proved that he attained the peak of greatness after his fiftieth year, particularly the last ten years, which are a most astonishing record of success in human history. During these troublous days Khadijah lent her full moral and financial support to her hard-pressed husband. She helped him with money to keep his head above water. She came forward with her influence to relieve the distress of those who were subjected to communal ostracism which amounted to virtual isolation. This was a landmark in the history of Islam, commemorating

the inauguration of the new era.

The Prophet never forgot the services of his stalwart wife, and, indeed, the entire world of Islam is indebted to her for the generous support she gave to the Prophet and all his followers at a time when Islam was at bay, fighting desperately for its survival. After her death, whenever the Prophet had an animal slaughtered in his house, he would send the flesh to her kinsmen as a mark of his gratitude for his wife. This speaks volumes for the Prophet's love for his deceased wife.

Khadijah led a simple life and had an extremely sweet disposition. Her heart was of gold, as, indeed, her purse. At the same time, she possessed great grit as well as worldly wisdom. She had made a comparative study of religions and was well grounded in the Christian and Jewish Scriptures. She used to say her prayers at night (five prayers were not compulsory at that time), but her heart was aglow with Divine love at all times.

The Prophet's love and gratitude for Khadijah was so great that 'Ā'ishah, the young wife of the Prophet whom he married after the death of Khadijah, became jealous of the deceased lady. One day, Khadijah's sister, Hālah, came to visit the Prophet. Hālah's voice sounded exactly like Khadijah. As soon as he heard the old familiar voice, he startled and said: "It must be Hālah; her voice is just like that of Khadijah." 'Ā'ishah, who was with the Prophet, burst forth in a fit of jealousy: "How is it that you always think of the old woman, who is no more living



when Allah has given you much better wives?" "Never better," replied the Prophet; "she hailed my mission at a time when everyone howled against it, and lent me the support of her conviction when there was hardly a believer. She enlivened my life when I was woe begone and opened the flood gates of her heart when I felt lonely and deserted. How can I forget her? She also gave me children most loving." On another occasion, when 'Ā'ishah was annoyed by the persistence of his fidelity, he remarked: "Khadijah's love is given to me by Allah." After this 'Ā'ishah never uttered any remarks about Khadijah.

Khadijah gave birth to two sons and four daughters. The first was al-Qāsim. He died at the age of four. The second was Ṭāhir alias 'Abdullah. Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthūm and Fāṭimah were the daughters. Zaynab was married to Abu'l-'Āṣ, the son of Khadijah's sister, and was born ten years prior to Prophethood. The Prophet was then thirty years old. In the Battle of Badr, Abu'l-'Āṣ fought on the side of the infidels and was brought as a captive before the Holy Prophet. For his release and ransom, his wife, Zaynab, sent a necklace which had been given to her in dowry by her mother, Ḥaḍrat Khadijah. When it was produced before the Prophet, his eyes grew misty. He ordered that the captive as well as the necklace be restored on condition that Zaynab be sent back to him at Medina. This was done. She died in the eighth year of Hijrah of a sword wound by Ḥammad b. Aswad, a bitter enemy of Islam and a relative of Abū Sufyān.

The Prophet performed her obsequies. Both Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthūm had been married before Prophethood to Atiba and Atba, sons of Abū Lahab. Owing to religious difference, Abū Lahab became a relentless enemy of Islam which led to the revelation of the following verse:

"Perish the hands of the Father of Flame (Abū Lahab)! No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains! Burnt soon will he be in a Fire of blazing flame! His wife shall carry the (crackling) wood—a twisted rope of palm-leaf fibre round her (own) neck!"<sup>7</sup>

Both the brothers divorced the two daughters of the Prophet. Ruqayyah was then married to 'Uthmān. It was the first light that illuminated the house of 'Uthmān. But she died as a result of prolonged illness and Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān was distraught with grief. The first pair that had migrated to Medina was Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān and his wife Ruqayyah. The Prophet gave him his third daughter, i.e. Umm Kulthūm, in marriage. Because of this double relationship he was called *Dhu'l-Nūrayn*, i.e. one who combines two lights in himself. The Holy Prophet after the death of Umm Kulthūm said: "If I had another daughter to marry, 'Uthmān would again be my choice." The Prophet entertained great regard for 'Uthmān and remarked: "Even the angels feel shy before the modesty of 'Uthmān." The Prophet was philoprogenitive by nature. He not only cherished his own children, but also the step-children from Khadijah. Even a Christian writer says: "Muhammad was at all times of an



affectionate disposition... he remained demonstratively affectionate to the end towards the slave Zaid, whom he adopted as a son." Zayd was given to the Prophet by his wife Khadijah, who had purchased him, as Zayd was captured by the Banū Man Ibn Tayb immediately on his entry to the city along with his mother. Later on when the Prophet migrated to Medina, Hamzah and Zayd became brothers. Zayd was openly called Zayd b. Muḥammad, when he elected to live with him and quit his own parents. Of all the children only Fāṭimah outlived him. She was the youngest of all. She was born when the Ka'bah was rebuilt. Fāṭimah was given in marriage to Ḥaḍrat 'Alī with the minimum dowry. The Prophet himself performed the *nikāḥ*. She was then about sixteen years old. Her dower was fixed at 480 dirhams. The dowry consisted of one *chaddar*, a pillow, a mattress, one *charpai*, one leather bottle with a spout, two earthen vessels, two leather bags, and a pair of grind-stones. What a staggering contrast to the prevailing lavishness of the dowries of today!

About the Prophet's love for Khadijah, Stanley Lane-Poole writes:

"This loving tender memory of an old wife laid in the grave belongs only to a noble nature; it is not to be looked for in a voluptuary."

Here is another extract from the same writer:

"An attempt has been made to explain away Muhammad's fidelity to Khadija, by adducing the motive of pecuniary prudence. Muhammad, they say, was a poor man, and Khadija rich and powerfully connected; any *affaire de coeur* on the husband's part would have been followed by a divorce and the simul-

taneous loss of property and position. It is hardly necessary to point out that the fear of poverty—a matter of little consequence in Arabia at that time—would not restrain a really sensual man for five and twenty years; especially when it is by no means certain that Khadija, who loved him with all her heart in a motherly sort of way, would have sought a divorce for any cause whatsoever. And this explanation leaves Muhammad's loving remembrance of his old wife unaccounted for. If her money alone had curbed him for twenty-five years, one would expect him at her death to throw off the cloak, thank Heaven for the deliverance, and enter at once upon the rake's progress."<sup>8</sup>

Once Fāṭimah came to him and complained that her husband 'Alī never cared for his children, for, to placate an enemy, he was arranging another marriage with Juwayriyah, daughter of Abū Jahl. So in the mosque the Prophet said: "Abu'l-'Āṣ, whom I gave my daughter Zaynab, stood by his word and sent her back to me at Medina. As for Fāṭimah she is the apple of my eye, so what pains her pains me. By God, the Prophet's daughter and the daughter of an enemy of Islam cannot live in one house." By this he meant that 'Alī could choose between the two and retain anyone he liked so long as Fāṭimah lived. Ḥaḍrat 'Alī did not contract another marriage. The Holy Prophet was very proud of having so many daughters. It is related on the authority of Bukhārī that once he declared that "he who is put to trouble for the sake of his daughters but still feels it a pleasure will be admitted to Paradise and the fire of Hell would not touch him." "The best of you are those who are kind to children, relatives and slaves," is another of



his sayings.

It is related about Fāṭimah that when the Prophet was on his death-bed and his wives and followers were around him, he beckoned to Fāṭimah to approach and whispered something in her ear which made her cry. He again drew her close and whispered something which made her smile. When asked about this odd behaviour, she kept quiet. But after the Prophet's demise she disclosed the secret of her alternating tears and smiles. She had wept when the Prophet of God had told her of his impending death and had smiled when he had cheered her with the hope that, of all his kin, she would be the first to meet him in Heaven. The Apostle had said about Fāṭimah: "Verily, Fāṭimah is the chief of the women of Paradise." Not because she was his daughter, or the wife of 'Alī, or the Mother of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, but because she was the model of a wife displaying patience and forbearance as well as piety and fidelity. Fāṭimah was the very image of her father, the Holy Prophet, in her looks and appearance. She never smiled after the demise of her revered father. She died on 3 Ramaḍān at the age of twenty-nine, leaving behind three sons and two daughters. Of the sons, Muḥsin died in infancy, and Imām Ḥasan and Imām Ḥusayn lived to ripe old age, leaving behind them a landmark in Islamic history. Fāṭimah's deep devotion and great piety are worthy of the highest respect for her on the Day of Judgment.

Khadījah was an elderly and scholarly lady when she married Muḥammad, fifteen years prior to the call of Prophethood. By the time the Prophet

launched upon his mission, she had lived for about twenty-five years with him and had known him very intimately. The fact that such a lady really believed in the truth of his mission and strongly supported him throughout, is a proof positive of the Prophet's inspiring personality. It may be easy to convince the whole world of one's sanctimony and sincerity but not one's wife, unless one is truly straightforward and sincere. She was blessed with a sweet disposition, and a superb character. Her looks and manners were extremely ingratiating. She derived much joy from the sight of her children. Her philoprogenitive nature and steadfast devotion to her husband are the hall-mark of her righteous character. Stanley Lane-Pole has further to testify:

"For five and twenty years Muhammad [on whom be peace] remained faithful to her elderly wife and when she was sixty-five and they might have celebrated their 'silver wedding' he was as devoted to her as when he first married her. During all these years there was never a breath of scandal. Thus far Muhammad's life will bear microscopic scrutiny."

Khadījah was the only lady who knew Muḥammad as a man and husband. She was laid in grave in an informal manner. At the most critical stage of the Prophet's mission, when persecution was at its cruellest and when he was in dire need of her help, the noble lady died on 11 Ramaḍān, three years before Hijrat, at the age of sixty-five and was buried in Mecca. The Prophet used to say: "Never did God give me a better wife than Khadījah and never was there a woman comparable to Maryam, daughter of



'Imrān, and Khadījah, my wife.' At her death-bed the Prophet assured Khadījah, that, though she could not share the fruits of his mission in this world, she along with three other ladies (the virgin Mary, Potipher's wife and Kulthūm, Moses's sister) would enter Paradise.

Khadījah's death was a great blow to the Prophet. Everything looked dark and dismal. In the great hours of battle, and indeed in all vicissitudes of life she had been his one palladium of support, so that her death was a great calamity to him. She was a princess among women and her vast influence won many converts to the new faith. From the beginning she stood faithfully by him. Whenever he was down-hearted and in despair, she inspired him with fresh hope and renewed courage. In Sūrah Ḍuḥā (xciii.) God reminds the Prophet of Khadījah's stalwart support in all his predicaments: "Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)?... And He found thee in need, and made thee independent."<sup>9</sup> It was indeed God's favour to the Prophet that he was united to a noble lady like Khadījah. She has been declared as *Ṣādiq Dost*, the true companion.

## 2. SAWDAH (Peace be upon her)

The death of Khadījah left the Holy Prophet inconsolable, the care of children adding to the gloom of bereavement. Although Zaynab and Ruqayyah his daughters had already been married, yet his two younger daughters, Umm Kulthūm and Fāṭimah, were

9. xciii. 6-8.

on his hands. His mission claimed much of his time and attention. The Companions felt his sorrow and desired that if he married, he would be relieved of a lot of domestic worry. Khawlah bint Ḥakīm, the wife of 'Uthmān b. Muzun, an adopted brother of the Prophet, proposed the name of Sawdah bint Zama'ah ibn Qays, one of the earliest converts to Islam from the tribe of Banī 'Āmir, who were considered as great chiefs and were well known for their traditions of chivalry and valour. Sawdah was formerly married to Sakrān b. 'Amr, also a convert to Islam. She had left for Abyssinia along with her husband, but had returned to Mecca about the time Khadījah died. Some days later Sakrān died, leaving Sawdah a widow with a son, named 'Abdur Raḥmān, who later died in the Battle of Jalūlah.

When the matter was brought to him, the Prophet thought over the proposal carefully. The call of his great mission made incessant demands on his time and he could not cope with the responsibilities of domestic life and the day-to-day requirements of the household. Moreover, an elderly lady, of nearly fifty years of age, would be better able to keep the children under proper care. Apart from these considerations, there was the question of his obvious duty to her deceased husband who had laid down his life in the service of the new faith. He had left his hearth and home for the sake of his faith, and Sawdah too had shared the exile. And now at Mecca she was alone and friendless. So Muḥammad (peace be upon him) decided to console her bereavement by taking her in marriage.



He approved of the suggestion and sent Khawlah herself to Zama'ah, father of Sawdah. She arranged a meeting between the Prophet and Zama'ah who gladly gave his consent to the marriage. The lady herself had no objection. The marriage took place at the residence of the bride and Zama'ah delivered the marriage oration. The dower was fixed at 400 dirhams. Her mother Shamūs was also pleased at this marriage.

This marriage with Sawdah was an act of compassion as well as expediency. She was an elderly woman with no means of livelihood and the fact that her husband had died as a result of persecution at the hands of the Quraysh was an added inducement for the choice. Apropos of this marriage, an adverse critic like William Muir writes: "And the marriage [so far as we know it was not one of mere interest and convenience, but of affection] was celebrated within two months of the death of Khadijah."<sup>10</sup> The marriage was certainly not for pleasure's sake, considering the fact that the good lady was fifty years of age at the time of her espousal.

When Sawdah's brother heard the news he wrung his hands in dismay and cast dust on his head. Later on, when he became a Muslim, he was ashamed of his folly and spoke highly of Islam and its preacher, the great Prophet.

Sawdah was passionately devoted to the Prophet and led a very simple and pious life. She looked after

10. *Life of Mahomet*, II, 208.

the children and treated them as a sacred trust. Later on when the Prophet married 'Ā'ishah, the young daughter of Abū Bakr, Sawdah rose to the occasion in a most exemplary manner. She loved 'Ā'ishah dearly and attended to all her needs. Subsequently, when the Prophet divided his time equally among all his wives, in consonance with the dictates of justice enjoined by the Qur'ān, Sawdah voluntarily surrendered her turn in favour of 'Ā'ishah, having regard for her youth and the great affection the noble Prophet bore for her. Is it not extraordinarily unusual for a woman to make such sacrifice out of deference to the wishes of her husband who was strict in his principles and would not go against them? It also shows her great love and regard for a co-wife. She wanted nothing but the honour of being one of the "Mothers of the Faithful".

The Holy Prophet and 'Ā'ishah both used to chaff the lady, who had implicit faith in God and respect for His Messenger. She was mortally afraid of the Dajjāl, after whose arrival the world would come to an end. Once when she was coming out of her hut, 'Ā'ishah, by way of joke, said: "Have you heard about the arrival of the Dajjāl?" Sawdah rushed back to her dwelling but in her panic entered a derelict hut. When the ladies, who had planned the joke, approached the Prophet to share it with them, he came to the hut and led her out saying: "Step out, there was no Dajjāl." He, too, could not control his risible faculties when he saw the old lady all atremble, covered with soot and stuck over with cobwebs from her



panicky embrace with a grimy pillar. It is a refreshing anecdote for the gloomy-faced house-holder who wears a look of perpetual frown and never drives the dull care away by an occasional breeze of this sort.

Sawdah migrated with the Holy Prophet to Medina and lived in the house of Khālid. Most of the wives of the Prophet were poor widows, leading ascetic life. Besides, they had a commonly cherished desire to comfort themselves truly as "Mothers of the Faithful". Hence, there was no ostentation about their lives. A message by Sawdah to the Prophet on the eve of his marrying Umm Salamah and Ṣafīyyah is significant: "My Lord, I am an old lady, enfeebled with age. I have no one else to look after me, and I have no hankering for worldly goods. The only desire in my heart is to remain your wife so that on the Day of Judgment I may be considered as one of the 'Mothers of the Faithful'. Please, retain me as such." When the message was conveyed to the Prophet, he laughed at the naivety of the lady's request and blessed her for her exalted ideals. For some days this became another theme of merriment in the family of the Prophet, who recited: "Live with them (your wives) on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good."<sup>11</sup>

Sawdah never regained the liveliness of spirit after the demise of the Prophet. Once, during his Caliphate, Ḥaḍrat 'Umar departed from the usual

practice among the Arabs by sending her a bag full of dirhams, instead of the customary dates. She asked the bearer as to its contents and was told that the bag contained dirhams. There was an evident look of disappointment in her face as she drily remarked that she would much rather have dates than dirhams, and promptly distributed them among the poor. Meekness and humility were the hall-marks of her character which contributed to the uniqueness of her position among the ladies of the house of the Prophet. Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah was once heard to remark that of all the ladies of the Prophet's harem, Sawdah was the only one she would have been pleased to step into the shoes of. Sawdah had a particularly devotional temperament. She was very punctilious about her hours of prayers. She would get up for her *Tahajjud* prayer with the Prophet before dawn and remain absorbed in her devotions till after sunrise.

The Prophet loved Sawdah for her goodness and piety as well as for her austerity. She was as regular in her fasts as she was punctual in her prayers. She set free a captive given her because her loving heart could not bear the sight of the distressed condition of his health. The Prophet was pleased with her magnanimity when he heard of the slave's emancipation, for he himself was the greatest emancipator of slaves. He held her and her entire family in high esteem because of their service to the cause of religion and to his children. She died in the twenty-second year of Hijrah towards the end of the Caliphate of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar and was buried in Jannat-ul-Baqī'. She has left



five Traditions.

### 3. 'Ā'ISHAH

(Peace be upon her)

'Ā'ishah bint Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq was born at Mecca eight (or possibly nine) years before the Hijrah, about 614 C.E., five years after the commencement of Revelation. Her mother was Zaynab bint 'Āmir, and was known as Umm Rūmān. 'Ā'ishah's own *kunya* was Umm 'Abdullah, after the name of her nephew 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr. This name is said to have been suggested by the Prophet. She was nicknamed Humayrah and traced her linear kinship to the Prophet.

As stated in the previous chapter, the Prophet, after the death of Khadijah, was inconsolable and Khawlah bint Ḥakīm broached to him the idea of marrying either 'Ā'ishah or Sawdah. He had married Sawdah because 'Ā'ishah had yet to be disengaged from her betrothal with Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im. Besides her father Abū Bakr, who was the second convert to Islam after Khadijah, was not sure whether marriage with a so-called brother-in-faith was valid. He had taken the Prophet as his brother and, according to the custom of the day, they were *loco fraternis*. But when the idea of his alliance was mooted, the Prophet declared that "marriage with the daughter of a real brother was prohibited but not with that of a brother-in-faith". Muṭ'im himself was averse to the match after the conversion of the family of Abū Bakr to Islam, because he apprehended wholesale conversion

of his family as a sequel to matrimonial alliance with staunch supporters of the Prophet. Thus the proposal was carried through and marriage solemnised in the month of Shawwāl, thereby exploding the traditional myth about the inauspiciousness of this month for nuptial celebrations. The dowry was fixed at 500 dirhams. The marriage ceremony was very simple. She was playing dolls with her mates when she was taken home where her father performed the *nikāḥ* ceremony. Indeed, it was so brief that 'Ā'ishah used to say she remembered nothing about her marriage. The marriage was not marked by any pomp or pageantry and there was no sumptuous wedding feast. When Ima visited the house of Sa'd b. 'Ubadah along with others, the Apostle asked them to join the function and placed a cup of milk and dates before them. When they declined saying that they were fasting, the Prophet made the pungent remark that one should not mix up fasts with lies. They realised their fault and joined them in eating. This shows that the Prophet was a mind-reader as well as a genial host.

There is a general misconception about the age of 'Ā'ishah at the time of her marriage. It is generally held that she was six or seven years old when the marriage was solemnised (tenth year of the Prophet's Call), but the consummation took place after the lapse of five years, i.e. in the third year of Hijrah. The *Hijrat* came off in the beginning of the fourteenth year of the Call, but Abū Bakr and the Prophet had both left their families at Mecca. It was only after they had settled at Medina that arrangements were made to



fetch the two families. This must have evidently taken three or four months. It is further related by Bukhārī that when Abū Bakr's family reached Medina, 'Ā'ishah fell ill. She remained confined to bed for about six months and lost all her hair. Thus there was clear interval of five years between the solemnisation of the marriage and its consummation, and 'Ā'ishah was not less than twelve years old at the time of the union, the first nuptials being in the nature of a bethrotal.

Miss Nabia Abbot, an Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago, in her book, *Aisha, the Beloved of Muhammad* (which has been rightly proscribed by the Government of Pakistan), has concocted wrong tales about her age and Muhammad's love, without ascertaining the facts of the case. The first part of the book is full of malicious and misleading statements. She should have known that the primary source of religious lore in Islam is the Qur'ān and the purity of its text is admitted by all. Unfortunately, writers like Miss Abbot, bent upon mischief, have drawn upon apocryphal sources, ignoring this basic record which alone could give the correct perspective. Another infallible source of enlightenment on these and other matters is the *Ḥadīth*—"the record of the sayings and doings of the Prophet". But neither of these prime sources have been tapped by Miss Abbot.

Apart from the popular conception, the following arguments may be adduced to prove that 'Ā'ishah was nine at the time of her *nikāh* with the Prophet

and was thus at least fourteen at the time of consummation:

(1) When the proposal of her marriage with the Prophet was put to her father, Abū Bakr, he said that she was already betrothed to Jubayr. The betrothal ceremony among the Arabs was held between three and six years of age.

(2) There is positive evidence in reliable reports that she was born about the year of the Prophet's Call. Bukhārī has it on the authority of 'Ā'ishah herself that when Sūrah liv. al-Qamar (the Moon) of the Holy Qur'ān was revealed, she was fairly grown up and remembered certain verses which she had heard from her parents. Undoubtedly, she could not have been less than four years of age and this sūrah was revealed not later than the fifth year of the Call. This points to her birth having taken place in the first or second year of the Call so that she could not have been less than nine years at the solemnisation of her marriage.

(3) Ibn Sa'd in a report in the *Ṭabaqāt* confirms that 'Ā'ishah was nine years of age at the time of her betrothal.

(4) Again, about Fāṭimah, Khadijah's daughter, the evidence of history is that she was five years older than 'Ā'ishah, and she was born about four years before the Call. This means that her birth took place about the second year of the Call and that she was nine years old at the time of *nikāh*.

(5) There are other reliable reports which show that 'Ā'ishah must have been of mature age at the time of her marriage and fully grown, both intellec-



tually and physically, before her union with the Holy Prophet. It was thus with full understanding of her duties as a wife and as a student of religion that 'Ā'ishah entered the Prophet's household. So the idea of her immaturity lacks substance.

What sort of dwelling place she got? A small hutment, eight or ten hands in length and six to seven hands in width; it had clay walls and roof that was covered with palm leaves. One could easily touch the ceiling with one's hand. The door had a single panel, and for days together they had no light; there were a few utensils and a rough mat covering the floor. This represented the sum total of their worldly belongings.

About 'Ā'ishah's intellectual capacity, Nabia Abbot concedes that 'Ā'ishah ranks with such leading traditionists of the school of Medina as Abū Hurayrah, Ibn 'Umar and Ibn 'Abbās. She had a wonderful memory and had learnt two or three thousand traditions by heart. 'Ā'ishah being his wife naturally enjoyed the intimate company of the Prophet and had free access to him than any companion or slave. She dug more deeply and precisely into the significance of the verses of the Holy Qur'ān than any other person, and laid the basis of an important principle of coordination between the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. This privilege gave 'Ā'ishah the first place among the traditionists of Islam. She never accepted a *ḥadīth* which was at variance with the Holy Qur'ān. Thus when she was told of Ibn 'Umar relating a *ḥadīth* about the dead persons suffering punishment on account of the wailings of the mourners, she did not

accept it because of the Qur'ānic dictum that "no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another,"<sup>12</sup> and later corrected the *ḥadīth* saying that what had really happened was that the Prophet had passed by the bier of a Jewess and, noticing the lamentations of her relatives, had remarked that they were wailing while she was being punished (for her sins). Thus she pointed this out to Ibn 'Umar who conceded.

'Ā'ishah never hesitated to thrash out matters with the Prophet. Once the Prophet said: "Whoever is called to account will be punished (*man ḥusiba 'uzziba*)." On hearing this 'Ā'ishah said: "Does not God say that account will be taken by an easy reckoning?" The Prophet explained that he was speaking of a person who had been called to strict account and subjected to stringent inquisition (*man nuquishal ḥisaba 'uzziba*). This shows how tolerant and indulgent was his attitude to enlightenment of inquisitors. There was easy approach of women for enquiries on matters of religious, social or economic importance. However, be it said to the credit of 'Ā'ishah that it was through her incisive inquest that conflicting points between the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* were cleared. She is truly held an authority on Traditions in Islamic jurisprudence.

Her principle was later on followed by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Bukhārī, the former a top jurist and the latter a prolific collector of *Ḥadīth*. Even today, jurists solve problems in the light of 'Ā'ishah's dictum of harmony between the Qur'ān and the



*Sunnah*. Equally numerous are the Traditions that bear witness to the ascetic simplicity of 'Ā'ishah's life. The majority agree that she would not live in modicum comfort, much less luxury, because of her lively remembrance of the hardship and poverty of the Prophet's life and his personal advice to her to content herself with the least of worldly goods—"a traveller's provisions and rough clothes"—and to discard the company of the rich. 'Ā'ishah relates that the Messenger of Allah once said: "This world is an abode for one who has got no abode, and property for one who has got no property. He who has not wisdom yearns for these." Hence, she wore patched clothes and, on occasions, rebuked people for their high living and extravagant habits. Her own resources were not inconsiderable. Her frugal habits and legacies from blood-relations brought her great wealth, but she gave it away in charity. Miss Abbot, in her book, *Aisha, the Beloved of Muhammad*, makes the grudging admission: "The Muslim traditions came in time to draw a picture of an ascetic and devout Aisha whose guiding principle in life was to live in faith and hope for its rewards, and practise free its charities. And it was, therefore, due to Muslim exaggerations of the later days that Aisha came to be ranked high not only among sages but also among the saints of Orthodox Islam." Miss Abbot, though deliberately distorting facts, must have been sufficiently conscious of the high degree of 'Ā'ishah's spiritual greatness to undertake the task of writing a book on the subject. She cannot help testifying:

"Many are the references in the traditions to her God-fearing and prayerful life, as seen in both her deed and sayings. She was given, at times, to tearful reading of the Qur'an and to long periods of fasting and prayers." Unbiased readers would of course draw their own conclusions. There being no canonical calendar in Islam, no attempt was ever made to whitewash 'Ā'ishah or any other character. The Muslim historian has no streak of euphemism. Once she requested the Prophet to build a pucca house for protection and safety, but he refused saying that they were devil's brothers who were extravagant.

As already stated, the Prophet loved 'Ā'ishah, not for the charms of her person, but because of her great intellectual calibre. It was on account of this that she was styled *Ṣiddīqah*, the truthful. Like all females, 'Ā'ishah had a youthful love for good things, but under the admonishing care of her great husband she discarded all vanities and remained a strict ascetic as long as she lived. Famous historians of almost every school of thought have borne evidence to this outstanding trait of her character.

'Ā'ishah describes how the Prophet was very particular about *Jihād* (waging holy war). Once when he was returning from the Battle of Khandaq (Ditch), Gabriel appeared all-bedraggled and travel-worn, and asked: "Why have you broken up the camp? Have you called off the war?" "Not yet," the Prophet replied, "but, where am I to proceed?" The angel pointed toward Banī Qarita. Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah says that she was amazed at the Prophet's alacrity in



taking the route indicated. She says that he was never neglectful of God's commands. Once, when the Prophet had hurt his finger in a fray, he breezily remarked that it was a mere flea-bite compared to what lay ahead of him as a crusader in the holy cause. She tells us how the women of the Prophet's family used to go into the battle to render first aid. She also says that on one 'Īd day, he saw a little boy at a street corner crying his heart out, while the other children were frolicking about and making merry. The Prophet took the little mite in his arms and coaxed out his tale of woe. The boy explained that his father had been slain in battle against the new Prophet, Muhammad, and his mother had remarried leaving him a waif in the streets. "Why not take me as your father?" the Prophet said; "and let 'Ā'ishah be your mother and Fāṭimah your sister." The boy smiled through his tears. He was brought home and taken under wings by Ḥaḍrat 'Alī. 'Ā'ishah says that the Prophet had a very soft corner in his heart for babes and kids.

An unfortunate incident threatened 'Ā'ishah's honour which was later on vindicated through Divine intervention. The Prophet was returning home from some expedition accompanied by 'Ā'ishah. They stopped enroute and the good lady, who travelled in the closed litter, went out to answer the call of nature. In the meantime the march was sounded. The attendants, unaware of her absence, packed their camels and jogged on with the empty litter, leaving her stranded in the jungle. 'Ā'ishah was thin and of lean

body, so her weight could not be felt in the litter. When 'Ā'ishah returned to the camp, she found it deserted and the caravan gone. While she was awaiting the arrival of someone to pick her up, Saḥwān Muwaṭṭal came along. Seeing her predicament, he got off and offered his camel to the revered lady, and led her to the caravan at the next stop. The sight of 'Ā'ishah arriving with Saḥwān set tongues wagging and the scandal-mongers spread all sorts of malicious tales. Even 'Alī advised the Prophet to repudiate 'Ā'ishah. Finally, a revelation came which silenced the whispering campaign and established the noble lady's sinlessness. It declared: "Why did not the believers—men and women—when you heard of the affairs,—put the best construction on it in their own minds and say: This charge is an obvious lie."<sup>13</sup>

The Qur'ān lays down that no charge of adultery is valid unless it is supported by four witnesses. It further provides that those who bring forward the accusation but do not produce four witnesses are to be punished with flogging to the extent of 100 strokes. The revelation in point said: "Why did they not bring four witnesses to prove it? When they have not brought the witnesses, such men, in the sight of Allah, (stand forth) themselves as liars!"<sup>14</sup> Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr decided to discard and swore no longer to support his relatives who took part in the slandering of his daughter 'Ā'ishah, and revelation also came: "Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing, are cursed in this life and in the hereafter:

13. xxiv. 12.

14. xxiv. 13.



for them is a grievous penalty."<sup>15</sup>

On another journey, 'Ā'ishah forgot her necklace while returning home with a caravan. She despatched couriers to retrieve it. While they were away from the camp the hour for prayers arrived, and being without water, they had to forgo the ritual. This created a problem which evoked a further revelation, permitting of *Tayammum*. The Qur'ān prescribed that where water was not available and prayers were to be performed, fine dust might be used for ablutions.

Thus it will be seen that on two distinct occasions, revelations to the Prophet came in to save an awkward situation for 'Ā'ishah and ultimately raised her integrity and honour. She has always occupied an exalted place in the eyes of Muslims and is held as a symbol of purity and piety.

Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr, and later on Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, continued to look after the Prophet's wives during their respective Caliphates and allowed them handsome pensions, alongwith the veterans of the Battle of Badr, which was the crucial victory for Islam against overwhelming odds, setting the pattern for all subsequent Muslim wars where the believers were outnumbered by the enemies of the faith.

Further, an important *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet enumerates the kind of defensive wars and says: "Whoever fights in defence of his person and is killed is a martyr; whoever is killed for his property is a martyr and whoever is killed for the cause of God is

15. xxiv. 23.

a martyr."

Fighting in the path of Allah has its great reward promised by God. In the first instance all those killed in the *Jihād* attain an eternal life.

The meaning of *Jihād* embodies in itself a wide scope of corporate action for repelling the enemy's attack. A Muslim jurisconsult of eighth century of Hijrah, al Kassānī, defined *Jihād* as the ability and power in fighting.

The obligation of *Jihād* on the community rather than on the individual is very significant and contains at least two important implications. In the first place it means that *Jihād* need not necessarily be carried out by all believers. For the recruitment of all the believers as warriors was neither possible nor advisable as laid down in the Qur'ānic verse quoted above. Others were needed to prepare food and weapons, while the crippled, the blind and the sick would not qualify as fighters as laid down in another Qur'ānic verse (xxiv. 60). Women and children were, as a rule, exempted from actual fighting, although many a woman contributed indirectly to the war effort.

While the other ladies got 10,000 dirhams each as subsidy, Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah was allowed 12,000 dirhams, this being a consideration to her unique position as the most favoured wife of the Prophet. Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah was very appreciative of this distinction, coming as it did from the ruling Caliph 'Umar, whose own daughter got the common scale of 10,000. Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān followed the munificent policy of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, although some of the subsi-



dies were discontinued. Then followed the restless days of Ḥaḍrat 'Alī's Caliphate, culminating in the Battle of Camel, whereafter 'Ā'ishah led a strictly retired life until the reign of Amīr Mu'āwiyah, which ushered in an era of complete tranquillity for the last eighteen years of her life.

Her double bereavement, due to the successive deaths of her great husband and her father, Abū Bakr, as well as the fact that she was childless, won her the particular care and sympathy of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, the Second Caliph of Islam. D.S. Margoliouth says:

"Of the entire number of inmates, Aisha alone by force of character and keenness of wit won for herself a place in the political and religious history of Islam. . . . From the time of her emergence from childhood till her death at the age of sixty-six she exhibited a degree of ability which should earn her a place beside Agrippa and Elizabeth of history."

She has left an unforgettable account of the Prophet's personality. She says that "the Prophet was not thick-set or stocky but lean and ascetic. He had a pink white complexion and large lustrous eyes with long lashes. He was bony but not hairy. His shoulders and chest had no capillary growth common to males. The palms of his hands were soft and small. He was generous-hearted, but simple and unassuming. He was shy as a damsel and complaisant as a courtier. He wore a sunny smile on his face even when mentally perturbed, and showed great considerateness for the susceptibilities of people around him. He never reviled or reproved a person for his churlishness. If he

took exception to some impropriety, he did so in a round-about way, dropping a gentle hint and let the matter sink in. It was my privilege to wait on his pleasure for close on ten years. During this prolonged contact he never even once rebuked me or found fault with my behaviour. He was the soul of urbanity, conquering all hearts with the gracious charms of his personality."

This shows that his character was indeed the embodiment of the teachings of the Qur'ān. It is believed that his presence had an illuminating effect upon his surrounding. One evening while Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah was sewing a shirt for her husband, she dropped her needle. She was fumbling about in the dark when the Prophet came in and, noticing her distress, broke into a smile. The glint of light from his teeth lit up the darkness, and 'Ā'ishah recovered the lost needle. It was such a unique experience that years after her lack-lustre eyes twinkled with light at its remembrance. 'Ā'ishah was convinced that there was an emanation of the Divine which radiated from the Prophet's person.

There is a *ḥadīth* on 'Ā'ishah's authority that the Prophet claimed that on the Day of Judgment the first person to be under the shadow of Allah would be the one who, when asked to spend, spent gladly, and dispensed justice as if he were himself the beneficiary. This is a virtual paraphrase of the age-old maxim : "Do as you would be done by." Once a woman with two daughters came begging alms. The girls were starving. 'Ā'ishah had only one date in the



house which she gave away in alms. The girls took half each and the Apostle beamed and said: "Never disappoint a beggar. Even a single date may bring its reward and take you to Paradise."

'Ā'ishah says that the Messenger of Allah said: "The love of money is the root of all evils." He shunned the society of the rich and openly declared: "This world is an abode for one who has got no abode and a property for one who has got no property. He who has got no wisdom hoards it." This underlines a concrete socialist doctrine. It shows that writers like Henry George (author of *Progress and Poverty*) who have now veered round to the view that the fact that in our highest civilisation men faint and die of want, is not due to the niggardliness of Nature but to the injustice of man and unawareness of the principles of the Islamic order of society which its founder preached fourteen centuries ago. It is now being increasingly realised by eminent thinkers that human race has not been following this basic standard of social justice.

'Ā'ishah says: "The Prophet never abused or spoke ill of anybody. He forgave faults, refrained from retaliation. He never thought of taking personal revenge, was strictly against infidels but forgave them promptly on their conversion to Islam; never fought on personal grounds, took interest in household affairs, condemned vendettas and blood-feuds, never beat anyone, not even a servant." In short, his life was a beacon of light for mankind for all times. Once she asked the Prophet: "Will nobody enter

Paradise except with the Divine behest?" He replied: "No one will be debarred from it if his actions are good." Once 'Ā'ishah made the caustic comment that Ṣafiyyah (one of the Prophet's junior wives) was a shrim. The Apostle overheard and said: "'Ā'ishah, you have uttered a word which, if dropped in sea, would contaminate the whole water." This shows that he never tolerated slandering and tale-bearing. The Prophet was very particular about his nocturnal devotions and saw that his wives too observed them. He ordered that when meal was ready, they should take it first and then say prayers because the spirit of prayer is damped with hunger.

It is said that 'Ā'ishah opposed 'Uthmān and had demanded that he made reparation and resign, and that she had a hand in the insurrection against him. But when 'Uthmān was besieged in his house, 'Ā'ishah had gone on pilgrimage to Mecca and indeed, when 'Alī was elected Caliph, she wanted him to avenge the murder of 'Uthmān. She joined Ṭalhah and Zubayr who collected a large army and started for Baṣrah. 'Alī met and defeated the host. 'Ā'ishah was on camel and in the thick of the fight; seventy men of Banū Dabbah, who had rallied to her defence, fell one after the other, until her camel was slain. This battle is known as the Battle of Camel. 'Alī gave orders that 'Ā'ishah be escorted to the house of Ṣafiyyah bint Ḥārith with all honour and provided with everything she wanted for her return to Medina. She was sent to Medina with due respect, under the protection of her brother, Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr.



After their reconciliation, 'Ā'ishah offered to accompany 'Alī in his subsequent campaigns, but 'Alī told her that her proper place was at Medina. She was a spirited woman of plucky nature.

It is related that once she was playing with dolls which included a horse with wings. The Prophet happened to pass by and, seeing the winged horse, said: "'Ā'ishah, have horses wings?" "Why not," was the quick reply, "had not the horses of Ḥaḍrat Sulaymān wings?" She had a gift of repartee even as a child. But she was a lady of strong character and strong will with a sunny face and bright disposition. She performed all the domestic duties herself and did not employ any servant. It is said that she served water to the wounded at the Battles of Uhud, Badr and Khandaq, with a skin water-bag slung across her back. This shows her eagerness for *Jihād* and also that Islam does not debar women from field jobs in times of emergency and we should have no qualms on this score when the occasion calls. On the other hand, free intermingling of sexes is not recognised in Islam. In view of 'Ā'ishah's reported avoidance of the sight of a blind man on the plea that if he could not see her, she could see him. It shows that she observed *purdah* in the proper sense. One day the Prophet said: "'Ā'ishah! here is Gabriel, the favourite angel of God. He offers his greetings." 'Ā'ishah reciprocated the greetings without asking to be shown the apparition.

Ḥaḍrat Anas says that once passing Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah's door he overheard her apostrophising the

Prophet in words which touched his heart immensely. Said she:

O you who never ate to satisfaction the loaf of barley;

O you who preferred poverty to richness;

O you who never slept for the night for fear of purgatory!

This shows how great was her affection and appreciation of the Prophet's noble personality. 'Ā'ishah, after the death of the Apostle, owned that she had once rebuked him because he would never eat to his heart's content, not even when he was offered food after long spells of starvation. She says that when she arrived at Medina, she found that they had to go without a morsel of barley bread for days together. The Prophet cheered her up telling her genially to knock at the door of Heaven. "But how?" asked the bewildered 'Ā'ishah. "Why, with your gnawing hunger," was the meaningful suggestion. She had an exceedingly charitable disposition and gave away her fortune in charity. She was against astrologers because the Prophet had said: "Woe to thee, O astrologer; it is only God Who knows what is hidden, and to all others it is a mystery." She heard the Prophet saying that a person consulting an astrologer will forfeit his forty days' prayer. She is rightly described as the Leader of Women. She fell ill in 58 H. Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās came to inquire after her health, and burst into rhapsody saying: "O, you the mother of the faithful! O, you the fountain of Traditions! O, you whose sayings are reproduced day and night, may God give you health!" She protested saying: "Please don't eulogise me to my face. My own desire is to efface myself completely." After a brief illness she



died on 17 Ramaḍān and was buried the same night in Jannat-ul-Baqī' (the cemetery of Medina) according to her dying wish. She had refused to be buried near her husband or father, the two great personalities, i.e. one great Messenger and the other a preacher of God's command. Abū Hurayrah performed the burial prayers and never was such vast gathering seen at a funeral ceremony. She has left nearly 2210 Traditions, i.e. nearly half in number of the Islamic Code.

#### 4. ḤAFṢAH

(May God bless her)

Ḥafṣah was the daughter of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second Caliph of Islam. Her mother Zaynab was the sister of 'Uthmān b. Mazūn b. Ḥabīb b. Mazūn, the thirteenth convert to Islam, and was born before the fifth year of Prophethood.

Ḥafṣah had first married Khumays b. Hudhāfah, of Banū Sahm tribe, who died childless at Medina as a result of wounds sustained in the Battle of Badr. Ḥafṣah's age at the time of her widowhood was hardly nineteen. Both had migrated with the Apostle of God. After the death of her husband, the Prophet thought it proper to marry her and to cement his relations with Ḥaḍrat 'Umar. In his book *Spirit of Islam*, S. Ameer Ali writes: "And public opinion not only approved it but was jubilant over it." This marriage took place after the second or third year of Hijrah. Ḥaḍrat 'Umar was a powerful personality whose decisive approach to sociological problems of the Islamic *millat* is a by-word of history. He was the embodiment of the conception of Islamic democracy,

marked by respect for individual liberty and an Islamic polity characterised by free, fair and equitable distribution of wealth. He told people that Islam advocated the establishment of "a world economy" where production and distribution of wealth would be so regulated that it could be shared equally by the widest section of humanity. Thus Ḥafṣah had sociology in her veins, having inherited it from her father.

Among the wives of the Prophet, her learning was next only to that of 'Ā'ishah. Her father gave her good education along with her brother, 'Abdullah. Much of her time was spent in reading and writing. She was the custodian of the copy of the Holy Qur'ān which was written down by Abū Bakr in the sequence laid down by the Holy Prophet. The script was then passed on to Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān who gave it to Ḥafṣah. This became the standard copy of the Holy Script.

Ḥafṣah used to impart education to such women as came to her for this purpose. The Holy Prophet kept her posted with the latest of revelations and held frequent discourses with her on topics of Islamic sociology. She would spend whole days attending to these talks to the exclusion of her own personal affairs. A revelation was read to his wives by the Prophet:

"And recite what is rehearsed to you in your homes, of the Signs of Allah and His Wisdom: for Allah understands the finest mysteries and is well acquainted (with them)."<sup>16</sup>

The Prophet gave her good grounding in principles of Islamic democracy which enriched her learning.



In pre-Islamic days, women were expected to keep their counsel and not permitted to bandy words with men. But Hafṣah was quick at repartee and not averse to joining issues with the Prophet when they happened to disagree. Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, her father, admonished her, saying that she was liable to be called to account of the Day of Judgment for the temerity of her tongue. He advised her not to imitate 'Ā'ishah in her liberty of speech as the latter was the Prophet's favourite and had precedence over her. One night she made the Prophet's bed more pliant by putting a bed-sheet of softer texture. The Prophet kept awake the whole night and in the morning complained about its cosiness. He told her not to make his bed too comfortable as there was the risk of his oversleeping and missing prayers. One day her father entered the house of the Apostle and was amazed to find him lying on the mattress without a bed-cover. The mat was rough and there were marks on his skin from contact with its hard surface. His head was supported on a pillow stuffed with palm fibres. Ḥaḍrat 'Umar was touched by the spectacle of his privation as he asked the Prophet to get up and pray. Seeing 'Umar's look of commiseration, the Prophet said: "O, Ibn Khaṭṭāb! you crave for amenities in this world! They are losers who get their reward so early."

There was very close friendship between 'Ā'ishah and Hafṣah and Hafṣah always sided with 'Ā'ishah against other wives. She remained childless.

Like the rest of the wives, Hafṣah received her

share in the booty of Khaybar and even during her father's caliphate got no more than the customary allowance of 10,000 dirhams, common to all.

But she did not dabble in the affairs of the realm, notwithstanding the towering personality of her father who carried all before him. Hafṣah says that the Prophet was very firm with women who came to him with complaints against their husbands. Once his own daughter, Ruqayyah, the first wife of Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān, came to him with complaints against her husband. Her approach was so affectionate and full of pathos that a father might well be moved. But not so the Prophet. He reprimanded her instead, saying: "Ruqayyah! I am firmly of the view that a wife should never come out of her home to bring even the greatest complaint against her husband. So go home and make peace with him."

Hafṣah was strict in the observance of prayers and fasts and died on a day when she was fasting. Her death took place in the 45 H. at the age of sixty in the month of Sha'bān. She was buried in Jan-nat-ul-Baqī'. At her death-bed she advised 'Abdullah b. 'Umar to distribute her property in charity. She left sixty-two traditions. Marwān conducted her burial prayers.

##### 5. ZAYNAB BINT KHUZAYMAH

(May God bless her)

She was the daughter of Khuzaymah b. Ḥārith, and had borne the name of *Umm-ul-Masākīn* (mother of the poor) since the days of "Ignorance" on account



of her generous disposition. She was a most benevolent lady and her heart overflowed with milk of human kindness and compassion for the poor. She traced her genealogy to 'Abd Manāf and claimed kinship with the Prophet.

Her first husband was Tufayl b. al-Hārith who had divorced her. She was then married to 'Ubaydah, the younger brother of her first husband. The latter fell a martyr in the Battle of Uḥud in 3 H. Both were related to the Prophet.

After 'Abdullah's death, Zaynab was in straitened circumstances. Several people offered to marry her, but she declined all overtures. The Prophet's own proposal was motivated by considerations of humanity and his sense of obligation to her dead consorts. She gladly accepted the honour, and the marriage took place in the month of Ramādān 3 H., succeeding the Battle of Uḥud. The Prophet gave her a dower of 400 dirhams.

She was thirty at the time of her marriage. She spent most of her time listening to tales of hardship among the poor, which rarely failed to evoke her sympathy. She says that the ladies of the Prophet's house did not worry much about financial matters and whatever was sent to them was spent in charity. Ḥaḍrat Bilāl saw to it, and managed somehow to raise money for the entertainment of unexpected callers and visitors of the Prophet, where he spent his turn to live for that day and night.

The "Mothers of the Faithful" had due access to the income from "Nakhlistān" and got their share of

booty in holy wars, all of which was distributed by them among the poor.

In the Battle of Uḥud, seventy Muslims fell martyrs and half the women in Medina were rendered widows. Islam did not leave them in the lurch. The surviving males were directed to marry the widowed females to alleviate their sufferings. It was for this reason that the Prophet resorted to polygamy, and his disciples followed suit. The practice, incidentally, sustained the moral and material standard of the widows. Modern Europe with millions of its unmarried women might well take a leaf from Islam and put a stop to its mounting concubinage. Zaynab had lost her bread-winner in war and the Prophet rescued her from direness of poverty and worse by taking her as his wife.

She was a polite lady of amiable disposition, and generous to a fault. Once it so happened that there was flour for only one meal in the house, when a beggar knocked at the door. The noble lady gave it away and went without food for the night. The Prophet was touched with her spirit of self-abnegation and got food for her from a neighbour in the darkness of the night. Next morning he related this incident to the rest of his wives and declared: "If you put your trust in God, as you ought, He would provide for you sustenance, even as He doth for the birds, who leave their nest hungry in the morning but return full at night."

But the Prophet did not enjoy the sweet company of this generous soul for long. She died within two



or three months of her marriage at the age of thirty in Rabī'-ul-Awwal 3 H., while she was married in Ramaḍān. She was the second Medinite wife to predecease the Prophet. The Prophet laid her to rest with his own hands. She was also the first lady to receive her burial with due obsequial rites according to the Divine commandment, for when Khadijah died, the Prophet had received revelation on the point. She was interred in Jannat-ul-Baqī'. She shall always be remembered as the Mother of the Faithful and Mother of the Poor because she was liked by all for goodness and charity and not for beauty.

#### 6. UMM SALAMAH

(May God bless her)

Umm Salamah or Hind was the daughter of Abū Umayyah b. al-Mughīrah, a famous horseman and leader of the Quraysh. Born with a silver spoon in her mouth and reared in the lap of luxury, she was rated high for her talents. Her mother was 'Atikah bint 'Āmir, of the prominent Banū Firās.

She chose 'Abdullah, son of 'Abd-ul-Asad as her husband who was later on known as Abū Salamah. Both Abū Salamah and his wife Umm Salamah had embraced Islam at the commencement of the Prophet's mission and migrated to Abyssinia to avoid persecution at the hands of the Quraysh. Umm Salamah gave birth to a daughter, according to another source to a boy named Salamah, after whom the parents were known as Abū Salamah and Umm Salamah.

On hearing a false report that the Prophet had made his peace with the Quraysh, the couple returned to Mecca but only to fall in the clutches of their old enemies and suffer renewed hardship. Later on, Abū Salamah made good his escape to Medina in the wake of the Prophet, but Umm Salamah was detained by her father, to the great sorrow of the young lady, and it was after many importunities that her hard-hearted parent relented and allowed her to join her husband. She set a laudable example for the female converts who were still dilly-dallying in Mecca. However, the facility of their reunion proved short-lived as 'Abdullah developed blood-poisoning due to the sepsis of wounds sustained in the Battle of Uhud and died eight months after. Umm Salamah had, in the meanwhile, conceived another child and was in the family way. She could not go back to her father and had no resources of her own. Her plight was represented to the Prophet who was already aware of her unfortunate position and contemplated matrimonial alliance with her as a measure of relief.

He conveyed his proposal through Ḥaḍrat 'Umar. Umm Salamah sent the word back that she was a sensitive and self-respecting woman, a spoilt child of her parents. Her late husband had indulged her every whim, and never spoken an unkind word. She was encumbered with children, without any financial competence. All this did not augur for a happy marriage. The Prophet replied that his own case being much the same, there was no chance of his being censorious in the matter. So, the marriage was



solemnised. Umm Salamah was a mature woman with four children, and her own son gave her away as bride.

'Ā'ishah's reaction to this marriage is best conveyed in her own words: "When the Messenger of Allah married Umm Salamah, I was extremely sad, having heard much of her beauty. I was curious desiring to see her myself. And, by Allah, I saw that she was twice as lovely and graceful as she was reputed to be. I mentioned this to Hafṣah. 'No dearie,' she replied, 'it is nothing but the phantom of your own over-excited jealousy. She is not all that.' Nevertheless, she too was curious, and, after having called to see her, confided to me: 'She is not exactly stunning, not even half so, though there is no denying her beauty.'" 'Ā'ishah says: "I saw her again afterwards and, upon my life, she was just as Hafṣah had described."<sup>17</sup>

The Prophet was extremely solicitous of Umm Salamah's welfare, and provided her sufficiently to maintain herself and her children. Indeed, the Prophet welcomed anybody who sought his aid. He could not do otherwise, being ordained by his mission to be a blessing to mankind. Umm Salamah was devoutly religious. She fasted three days in the week, i.e. Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, and was regular in her midnight prayers (*Tahajjud*). She let slip no opportunity to help those who came soliciting her help. But her greatest desire was to requite her husband's magnanimity with personal devotion.

17. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, VII, 66.

Like 'Ā'ishah and Hafṣah, Umm Salamah was a learned woman. She was an avid listener to the Prophet's discourses and remembered a good many of the Traditions. She has handed down 378 of them. She was voted wise, and invariably chosen by the ladies of the harem to be their spokesman in their representation to the Prophet. One day they brought her a poser which had baffled their ingenuity. The wise one offered a solution which won the acclaim of all. She was an authority on *Fatāwā* (verdicts on Islamic jurisprudence).

Umm Salamah says that the Prophet never failed to pay a call when a Companion of his fell ill. He had an excellent bedside manner and a knack of cheering the patient by his light-hearted attitude to illness. Trouble, he would say, cleanses the soul. He would inquire of the sufferer if he craved for a particular food or drink and, if it was not bad for his condition, would provide it for him. A Jew lad who was in his employ fell sick. The Prophet went to his house to acquaint himself with the ailment, and see what he could do for him. This shows he was *Rahmat-ul-lil-Ālimīn*.

Like 'Ā'ishah, Umm Salamah also led prayers among the ladies. Once she was wearing a precious golden necklace. The Prophet cast a significant look at it. Umm Salamah at once caught his meaning. She did not appear in his presence until she had given it away in charity. The Prophet smiled when he saw her again without the ornament. This is quite in contrast to our society these days.



Once a party of women from Hims in Syria came to see her. Some of the young girls spoke lovingly of the delights of open-air bathing in pools. The puritan lady was thoroughly aroused. Drawing their attention to the iniquity of the nude, she told them how God abhorred those who paraded their physical charms. She quoted a *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet saying that God never betrays the secret of those do not unclothe themselves in dwelling other than their own. The girls were smitten with remorse and some of them were reduced to tears.

Umm Salamah had a rare gift of the gab, so that none of her interlocutors were allowed to score against her in disputation. Once Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, learning that his daughter Ḥaṣṣah was getting to be forward in speech with the Holy Prophet, arrived to admonish her about her boldness. He found her among the bevy of the harem. Taking advantage of their presence he pressed the matter home to his own daughter as well as to others, and warned them against uninhibited speech with the Holy Prophet, whereupon Umm Salamah raised her voice in protest: "Ibn Khaṭṭāb! you interfere even in affairs of the married life!" 'Umar appreciated the propriety of the remark and broke into a laugh. Verily, Ḥaṣṣah as a wife had every right to be free with her husband, within limitations of decency. On another occasion, Umm Salamah was deputed by the ladies of the harem to plead their case before the Prophet. She acquitted herself well and came off with flying colours. She had an extremely melifluous voice and her recitation of the

Qur'ān was much appreciated. At the same time, she was very punctilious with her prayers, and her prayer-mat lay next to her bed. She was very fond of learning and her discourses attracted large audience. Next to 'Ā'ishah, she was the most talented of the Prophet's wives. She says that the Prophet could never tolerate taunts against 'Ā'ishah. Once Umm Salamah said something derogatory and the Prophet protested: "O Umm Salamah, don't say anything against 'Ā'ishah. None of my wives were exalted and honoured with revelation as she was. The Holy Qur'ān has testified to her righteousness."

Once, when the Prophet was out on an expedition, Umm Salamah put a wall of sun-dried bricks. The Prophet was not pleased with the structure, taking it as a sign of ostentation. "Verily, the most unprofitable way of spending money for a true believer is to raise useless constructions," he told her. Once, certain Companions sought Umm Salamah's views about the Prophet. "Well," she replied, "he is just what he appears to be." The whole *sīrat* of the Holy Prophet shows that he completely respected and safeguarded the fair sex.

She recounts a curious incident regarding Marhab, a great Jew warrior. When a sword hit him in the teeth there was a strange noise, or exclamation which she was not able to make out, but which was so eerie that it kept ringing in her ears for days together. Umm Salamah was by the Prophet's side in most of his battles. She describes how in his march to and from the battlefield, the Prophet kept a watchful eye



over the safety and comfort of his female companions. Once a camel-driver in the caravan started singing *hudī*, a desert song which makes the animal go faster. The Prophet turned to the camelman and said jokingly: "Look, you don't break the glassware." He was referring to the safety of the female travellers in the caravan. She says that the Prophet was a fierce fighter while in the battlefield. But once the war was over, and the vanquished were brought as captives, he displayed all generosity and mercy, striving busily for their comfort. A captive from the Battle of Badr, overcame with gratitude, burst forth into exclamation: "May God shower His blessings on these Muslims, who care more for us than for their own children." Umm Salamah says that she could not believe her eyes when she saw the Prophet bustling about the camp to accommodate the captives as they dribbled in under escort.

After the treaty of Hūdaybiyah, it was Umm Salamah who recommended the advisability of offering sacrifice, when the Companions believed it to be *ultra vires*, beyond the pale of Hāj. This was a milestone in ritualism in Islam. Umm Salamah surpassed all other wives in devotion to the Prophet. When he was on death-bed, she cried: "O Prophet of Allah, may I and my whole family die that you be spared!" As she wailed aloud, the Prophet gestured her to be quiet and not to give way to grief. It is said that she remained silent and fasting for several days after the sad demise of her great husband.

Umm Salamah was 'Ā'ishah's great admirer on

account of her moral and mental accomplishments. Her remark on the death of 'Ā'ishah was: "God bless this woman who was, next to Abū Bakr, dearest to the Prophet." She was the last of the Prophet's wives to die, thus witnessing the harrowing spectacle of internecine wars among political aspirants of post-prophetic days.

But the crowning tragedy of her life was the martyrdom of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, that soul-searing tragedy which has disfigured the history of Islam, but upheld the truth. Umm Salamah says that one night, in her dream, she saw the Prophet, his head touselled and begrimed with dust. She asked what he had been doing. The Prophet replied that he had just been to Ḥusayn's funeral. This was followed by the catastrophic news of the tragedy of his grandson, Ḥusayn in Karbala.

Umm Salamah died at the advanced age of eighty-four in the month of Shawwāl 63 H. Abū Hurayrah recited her burial prayer. There was a vast concourse at the funeral. She lies buried in Jannat-ul-Baqī' alongside the other wives of the Prophet (may peace be on them all).

## 7. JUWAYRIYAH

(May God bless her)

Her original name was Barrah, and later, on her marriage with the Prophet, she took the name of Juwayriyah. She was the daughter of Hārith, chief of Banū Muṣṭaliq. She was first married to Musāfi' son of Ṣafwān, another enemy of Islam, who died in one



of the battles. In the Battle of the Ditch in which the Prophet and the Muslims met the confederate tribes of non-believers who were compelled to fight in his own city by a group of Jews who promised to support him. Three thousand people were with the Prophet behind the ditch which was dug around Medina. This battle took place in the fifth year of Hijrah. Many tribes of Banū Kinānah, Tihāmah and the tribe of Ghatafān and others who followed from Najd joined together in this battle. The Jews had refused to act on the covenant of neutrality which they had signed. The siege of Medina was painful and suspense remained for about one month, but ultimately the followers of the Prophet came out with flying colours and victory touched their feet. Again, after one year, the Prophet fought a battle near the spring of al-Maraysī. It was a bitter and strong fight and ultimately Banū-ul-Muṣṭaliq were defeated. A lot of booty came in the Muslim camp including Barrah bint Hārith ibn Abū Dirār, or as the Prophet later called her Juwayriyah. An event of great importance was to follow to put an end to polytheistic paganism and inherited error.

According to the prevalent custom of those days, the prisoners of war were divided among the warriors and Juwayriyah fell to the lot of a citizen who demanded nine mithqāls of gold as her ransom. Juwayriyah who was about twenty years approached the Prophet in the hut of 'Ā'ishah and said: "O Prophet of God, I am the daughter of al-Hārith b. Dirār, the lord of his people. You know that it is by chance that our

people have fallen captive and I have fallen to the share of Qays and have requested him for release due to my status, but he has refused. Please do an act of kindness and save me from humiliation." The Prophet was moved. After all he had defeated her clan but at the same time he was always on the lookout to find an opportunity to win some people with love and affection and not only by the sword. Coersion was not the criterion of his statesmanship and theory of government. The heart of the Prophet was also moved with the adversity, beauty and high status of the captive and he ultimately replied: "I order that you are released and I marry you to save the tragedy befalling upon you." According to another report, the father of the girl, for family prestige, approached the Prophet with the request to save his honour by taking her as his wife, after paying off the ransom. When the warriors found that Banū Muṣṭaliq had become the relatives of the Prophet by virtue of the marriage, they set their captives free. Thus the union between the Holy Prophet and Juwayriyah led to the emancipation of hundreds of captives who blessed the alliance resulting in their freedom.

This marriage, like the previous one, is a clear proof of the fact that almost all matrimonial unions of the Prophet were diplomatic and political, rather than lustful. Nor is this diplomacy to be derided. Indeed, the strife-torn world of today needs some such solution for the mounting prejudice between its conflicting nationalities poisoning mutual relations. The Prophet believed in open politics and steered clear of



subtle diplomacies.

Those matrimonial alliances paved the way for the abolition of slavery which had endured for centuries with not a person moving his little finger against it. The Prophet gave practical demonstration of the democratic spirit of Islam by preaching the equality of man. "Cease from boasting of your ancestry. Verily we are all children of Adam," he declared. He condemned discrimination between classes and clans, and plumped for national solidarity, which has been the stock theme of every thinker of Islam right up to the modern age. The greatest poet of the East, Ḥakīm-ul-Ummat, Dr Muḥammad Iqbāl, has the following word of advice for the Muslim bourgeois: "You may be Sayyids, Mirzas and Afghans, but see that you are true Muslims."

Juwayriyah turned out to be a great religious devotee. Her long prayers and constant fasts were a by-word of the family. She was all for the expansion of Islam and a passionate reader of religious books, especially the Qur'ān, which was taught her by 'Ā'ishah. 'Ā'ishah was well pleased with this marriage of the Prophet as it brought glory to their faith and its founder. She considered Juwayriyah a great asset to the *millat*. In an assembly she said: "Nothing was a greater blessing to her people than Juwayriyah or a more unfought victory for the Prophet than his marriage to this lady." About her personality she said: "She exudes a charm that nobody coming under her spell can resist."

She died at the age of sixty-five in the fiftieth

year of the Hijrah, during the reign of Mu'āwiyah. She was buried in Jannat-ul-Baqī' in Medina.

#### 8. ZAYNAB BINT JAHSH

(May God bless her)

Zaynab was the daughter of Umaymah, a sister of the Prophet's father 'Abdullah. Her *kunyah* was Umm-ul-Ḥakam. She was one of the first emigrants to Medina, and had good parentage.

At Medina a new social order was being evolved. It pulled down the barriers of birth and pedigree and levelled all distinctions of the high and the low. Equality preached and practised at all levels became the corner-stone of its people's new ideology.

The Prophet had decided to give Zaynab in marriage to his adopted son Zayd b. Ḥārith, who was also a freed slave, and he was loved more than a son, because he had no live male issue. Zayd was purchased by Ḥaḍrat Khadijah and later on placed at the disposal of the Prophet who adopted him as a son and lavished great love and affection on him. Afterwards, his kinsmen approached the Prophet to allow Zayd to rejoin his family, but Zayd would not hear of it. He said that he could never leave the Prophet as long as he lived. He had found love and affection more than his deserts and he could not be ungrateful to him. So his relatives went away disappointed. In appreciation of his singular devotion to himself and Islam, the Prophet wanted him to marry Zaynab, his kinswoman, but there was much opposition to the match. Zaynab had remained a virgin up to the age



of thirty because of her headstrong nature and sturdy independence. Zayd was an ex-slave of the Prophet. Zaynab's people felt that the marriage would not be successful and demanded assurance and security. The Prophet held himself responsible for Zaynab's upkeep after her marriage and guaranteed her marital happiness. This disarmed their fears and the marriage was solemnised. Of the slaves, Zayd was the first to embrace Islam and the foremost *Sālār Lashkar* in the field of battle.

However, Zaynab's behaviour towards her husband was full of arrogance. She would not serve him but preferred to be served by him. She would sleep on a cosy bed, and leave Zayd to shift for himself. She was a great beauty, one of the greatest in Arabia. She treated her low-born husband as scum and kept him at an arm's length. But being mindful of the Prophet's word, Zayd endured this humiliating treatment for a time and then let himself go. The Prophet did not approve of his behaviour and directed Zayd to be more considerate and restrained. But all in vain; their relations did not improve.

One day Zayd went completely off the rails, and divorced her in a fit of rage, in 5 H.

The relatives of Zaynab were astounded. They could not believe that a freedman could divorce an aristocratic lady of the Holy Prophet's family, but the Prophet, having been a witness to the humiliation of Zayd, no longer held him responsible for the rupture. Zayd had enjoyed the unremitting love and affection of the Prophet and had been entrusted by him

with missions of the highest responsibility. He was not called to account for the mishap. Zaynab herself was so utterly disgusted with the freed slave that she never gave him a moment's thought. The Prophet was responsible for her upkeep, and she was much too independent-minded to care for remarriage. So matters lay still for a time. Then the revelation came:

"Then when Zayd had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), We rejoined her in marriage to thee: in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the Believers in (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have dissolved with necessary (formality) (their marriage) with them, and Allah's command must be fulfilled."<sup>18</sup>

Islam does not recognise adoption as in Hinduism or the old Roman Law. Nevertheless, the Christian missionaries have exploited this marriage deliberately to vilify the Holy Prophet. Many self-styled stories have been made about this marriage. The Prophet knew her and she too acknowledged her, so there could be no scandal.

In his *Tafsīr-ul-Fātiḥah wa Mushkilāt-ul-Qur'ān*,<sup>19</sup> Muḥammad 'Abduh has rebutted these allegations, as well as in Chapter "Tawḍīḥ Mas'alatu" of his *Muhammad the Prophet*.<sup>20</sup> However, there is no end to the campaign of vilification. God knows the truth.

It is enough to point out that the Qur'ān does not allow a person to enter a stranger's house unannounced and that a stranger has to shout his greetings from

18. xxxiii. 37.

19. Cairo, 1330 H.

20. Lahore, 1924.



outside, obtain permission, and then enter. In this respect, the Qur'ān enjoins as follows:

"O ye who believe! enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you, in order that ye may heed."<sup>21</sup>

Again, the Holy Qur'ān forbids two strangers of opposite sexes to remain alone in a house. Moreover, the Prophet could have married Zaynab even before she was given in marriage to Zayd. There being no *pardah* in those days, and Zaynab being his first cousin, the Prophet must have had full awareness of her charms. His *harem* contained half a dozen ladies of various ages, too many for an old man of fifty-seven. In any case, nothing could prevent the Prophet from marrying her when she was a virgin. Refusal of her hand as the daughter of his aunt in the first instance, and acceptance later on when a divorced woman was considered a curse show that the motive in this marriage was anything but self-gratification, which impartial thinkers will judge for themselves. As for the Western writers, there is no cure for the jaundiced eyes. The Qur'ān says:

"In their hearts is a disease. And Allah has increased their disease; and grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves)."<sup>22</sup>

Zaynab, on her marriage with the Apostle, received a dowry of 400 dirhams. She was proud of peculiar circumstances of her marriage and used to say that Muḥammad's other wives had been given to him by their fathers and brothers while her union had been

21. xxiv. 27, 22. ii. 10.

brought about by Divine command. She was grateful to the Prophet for the new life which freed her from the ignominy of divorce. The verse of *al-Hijāb* (order of veil) appears to have been revealed on the occasion of Zaynab's wedding feast:

"O ye who believe, enter not the Prophet's houses,—until leave is given you,—for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter; and when ye have taken your meal, disperse without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet.... Nor is it right for you... that ye should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is in Allah's sight an enormity."<sup>23</sup>

'Ā'ishah describes her as a woman of great character, for she displayed the noble breeding of a high family. Zaynab was the first amongst the wives of the Prophet to refute the false charge against 'Ā'ishah.

It was an ordinary routine of the Prophet to attend to the requirements of his wives and pay personal visits after the 'Aṣr prayer. Ḥaḍrat Zaynab once cooked a very delicious dish, which smelt like *Maghāfīr* (as juice which is distilled from certain shrubs in Arabia and resembles honey in taste but has a strong flavour). However, her co-wives found fault with its smell from motives of jealousy, whereupon the Prophet swore not to taste it again. Just then a revelation came: "O Prophet! why holdest thou to be forbidden that which Allah has made lawful to thee? Thou seekest to please thy consorts. But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."<sup>24</sup> The Prophet changed his mind and resumed his meal along-

23. xxxiii. 53.

24. lxvi. 1.



with that juice. Zaynab assumed a new stature in the Prophet's eyes, like 'Ā'ishah, in whose case there was a heavenly interposition to redeem her honour on two distinct occasions, when her honour was at stake. Zaynab was a friend of 'Ā'ishah. She accompanied the Prophet on his expedition against Khaybar. Her generosity was proverbial. Muḥammad's prediction: "The longest-handed of my wives shall be the first to join me in Paradise" refers to this lady as she died soon after the demise of the Prophet. She had received 12,000 dirhams from 'Umar in the twentieth year of Hijrah, but kept not a penny for herself, having given all in alms to the poor. She was the only wife of the Prophet who refused to receive any help from any quarter after the death of the Holy Prophet. Again, Ḥaḍrat 'Umar sent her one thousand dirhams but she gave them away also in charity. Her personal expenses were defrayed by her needle work in which she was an adept. Zaynab was about thirty-eight at the time of her marriage with the Prophet and died at the age of fifty-three in the twentieth year of the Hijrah. She had made her coffin arrangements in advance. Ḥaḍrat 'Umar recited her burial prayer.

#### 9. UMM ḤABĪBAH

(May God bless her)

Her nick name was Ramlah, but she was called Umm Ḥabibah after Ḥabibah, her daughter's name. She was the daughter of Abū Sufyān and was born seventeen years before the commencement of the revelation. She had married 'Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh.

When the Prophet declared his mission, the couple embraced Islam and migrated to Abyssinia during the second movement. Their daughter, Ḥabibah, was born in Abyssinia.

On reaching Abyssinia, 'Ubaydullah embraced Christianity but Umm Ḥabibah persisted in Islam. His conversion led to the disruption of their marriage. Later on the husband died. When the Prophet was informed of her plight, he sent 'Amr b. Umayyah al-Damrī to the Negus to negotiate her marriage with the Prophet. By this stroke of genius he won two objects. He satisfied his pet policy of rehabilitation of the distressed and, at the same time, disarmed the hostility of Abū Sufyān, her father, who was an inveterate foe of Islam. The Negus conveyed the proposal to 'Umm Ḥabibah through his slave-girl Abrahah. The lady was so glad to receive the proposal from the Prophet of God that she presented two silver bangles and a few rings to the slave-girl in token of her gratitude.

The Negus assembled all the Muslims in Abyssinia and himself presided over the ceremony. Khālīd b. Sa'īd, the Umayyad, gave away the bride. The Negus presented a sum of 400 dinārs from his own pocket to Khālīd b. Sa'īd. The Negus held a feast to celebrate the marriage to which all the Muslims were invited. When Umm Ḥabibah received the amount of the *Mehr*, she paid fifty dinārs to Abrahah, the slave-girl. But she returned the amount alongwith the jewels saying that the Prophet had forbidden her to accept any present from her. Next day Abrahah brought



quantities of incense, saffron, amber, etc., for the bride to take with her to her august bridegroom. When all the ceremonies connected with marriage were over, the Negus sent Umm Ḥabībah to Medina under escort of Shurahbīl b. Ḥassanah. When Abū Sufyān was apprised of the marriage, he blurted out: "At least Muḥammad [on whom be peace] has no black mark in his career as a man." At the time of her marriage with the Prophet Umm Ḥabībah was thirty-eight. She was a very kind and considerate lady and had great respect for the Prophet. She had great fear of God in her heart and used to pray for salvation not only of herself but of all Muslims. She was a great cherisher of orphans. Once when a believer died, all his children were taken over by the good lady and looked after until they attained majority.

Once Abū Sufyān paid a visit to Medina as an ambassador of the Quraysh, and visited his daughter. He was about to sit on the bed of the Holy Prophet when Umm Ḥabībah pulled off the bed and made him sit on a mat. Abū Sufyān was surprised. When asked to explain this, Umm Ḥabībah replied that being a polluted infidel, he could not sit on the sacred bed of the Prophet of God. The father left in fury and cursing, saying that from the first day of her youth she had been a looser, but she replied: "I care not for this world." But as a daughter she prayed for the salvation of her father also. The news of a victory of the Prophet was welcomed by all. But when Umm Ḥabībah learnt that the Prophet had declared:

"Whoever enters the house of Abū Sufyān is safe," she prayed to God for the long life and prosperity of the Apostle.

When 'Uthmān, during his Khilāfat, was besieged in his house and the inmates thirsted for drink, Umm Ḥabībah took a supply of water to the house, but the insurgents handled her roughly and one of them punctured the water bag, draining off the drink.

When a few days after the death of her father she used a perfume, her reply to a curious bystander was that after three days there should be no mourning, as ordained in Islam. The period of four months and ten days were reserved for the demise of the husband only. She died at the age of seventy-three in the forty-fourth year of Hijrah during the reign of Mu'āwiyah, her brother. She lies buried in Medina, in al-Baqī'. Of all the wives Umm Ḥabībah had to make great sacrifices for Islam. Although she was an aristocratic lady and the daughter of a chief, and a great beauty of her days, she preferred to embrace Islam. She married firstly a poor man and got him converted as the follower of the Prophet. Later on she left her city for the cause of Islam. It was not an ordinary thing to leave home with all family greatness and ancestors. To crown all, the husband also deserted her and left her all alone without any subsistence. Only God's blessings were with her because she had taken all the troubles for Islam and its founder. She led such a pious life that God came to her help and she got the greatest reward and the Prophet married her.



## 10. ṢAFĪYYAH

(May God bless her)

Her real name was Zaynab, her father was Huyayy b. Akhtab, a chieftain of Banū Naḍīr and in the lineage of Moses. Her mother was Barrab bint Samawa'l. She had been married to Sallām b. Mishkam, a warrior and a poet of repute, who divorced her for incompatibility of temperaments. In 6 or 7 H. she was married again to Kinānah b. al-Rabī' b. Abī'l-Huqayq, another brave warrior and Commander of Qamūs fortress. Her age at the time of this marriage was about seventeen. Her father and uncle, Abū Yāsir, were among the Prophet's bitterest enemies. When their tribe was expelled from Medina in the fourth year of Hijrah, her father settled in Khaybar together with Kinānah. When the Prophet marched against Khaybar, the stronghold of the enemy which ultimately was destroyed, its fortresses fell, one after the other, its men were killed and a lot of women were taken captive after a pitched battle, and Kinānah was brought alive before the Prophet. It was thought he knew all about the treasures of the Banū al-Naḍīr. He denied any knowledge of the treasures. Later on he was killed by Muḥammad b. Maslamah whose real brother, Maḥmūd, had been burnt alive by the Jews at the instance of Kinānah.

When Khaybar fell in the seventh year of the Hijrah, Ṣafīyyah was captured alongwith her two cousins. She was brought to the bier of her husband and the Prophet seeing her henna-dyed hands took pity on her. In the division of the spoils she had been

assigned to be given to Dihyah b. Khalīfah al-Kalbī. When the Prophet went round inspecting the captives, Ṣafīyyah appealed to the Prophet. To uphold her dignity being a member of a noble family and not to put her to humiliation, she deserved release from slavery. The Prophet, already moved on account of the tragedy befallen upon her, obtained her release from Dihyah for a consideration of seven head of cattle. Then he invited her to embrace Islam which she readily did, because even when she was a non-believer she had a good idea about Islam and its Prophet. Her emancipation was her dowery. At Khaybar the feast of victory was celebrated with an abundance of dates, butter, milk and meat. Guests ate to their fill. People were waiting nervously for the treatment to be meted out to the new captives. But to their amazement Ṣafīyyah was directed to cover her face from public gaze, and a robe put on her being a sign of marriage engagement—a system which is very old and is still in vogue amongst the Hindus.

The Prophet, out of compassion for the noble girl, took her as his wife on his way back to Medina. In happiness the bride forgot the terrible massacre of her family and her own captivity. She was rather glad on the new marital alliance with the noblest man of the day. It is related that she bore the scar of a bruise upon her eye. When the Prophet saw the mark he enquired solicitously about it. She told him that while yet Kinānah's wife, she beheld in a dream that the moon had fallen from the heaven into her lap. When she related this to Kinānah, he flew into a rage



and gave her a severe slap, saying: "This dream is no a dream but covetousness to have the King of Hejaz (Prophet of Islam) for thy husband." The Prophet, after hearing this, smiled and said: "God is always with me in all matters." After the marriage, it is said, the followers of the Prophet kept guard throughout the night so that the people of the bride may not harm the Prophet as all her leaders and relatives had been killed.

Ṣafīyyah did not receive warm welcome at Medina. Her beauty evoked jealousy in 'Ā'ishah and other wives of the Prophet who occasionally referred to her Jewish origin. Once 'Ā'ishah taunted her and she complained to the Prophet saying that 'Ā'ishah had rebuked her on the score of her ancestry. The Prophet suggested the following rejoinder to silence her caviller: "Tell 'Ā'ishah that your (Ṣafīyyah's) father was Hārūn and uncle Moses and husband the Prophet of God, i.e. Muḥammad. What about 'Ā'ishah's ancestry? All infidels," and then the Prophet married her only under God's order because she had become a Muslim. The words of the Prophet preached Islamic equality and flowered over Ṣafīyyah like a shower of peaceful, refreshing rain and found good protection from the onslaught.

It is reported that once Muḥammad (peace be upon him) was displeased with 'Ā'ishah for the sharpness of her tongue and rebuked her and also his second wife Zaynab who found fault with Ṣafīyyah's Jewish extraction and refused to lend her camel. Both incurred the Prophet's displeasure who did not visit them

for two months. In a sermon he said: "O, ye the people of Quraysh! God has suspended your old tradition of boastful swagger about your ancestry. People have descended from Adam and he was made of clay." However, Ṣafīyyah's relations with Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter, were cordial from the very first. When she visited her, she gave Fāṭimah costly earrings. She lived a life of aloofness in the midst of jarring elements. For we find no further mention of her in the years preceding the Prophet's death, except in an episode which shows her devotion to him. When the Prophet was on his death bed and in the throes of agony, she exclaimed: "O Prophet of God! I wish all your suffering came to me and you were relieved." The Prophet was grateful and said that Ṣafīyyah had uttered true words and was a faithful companion. Many times she heard the wounding words of critics who envied her living with the Prophet of Islam although she was an alien intruder.

She left prayers of the Sabbath and chose Friday for prayers as ordered by the Prophet.

She sided with 'Uthmān in his political wrangles and, while he was besieged in his house, she made an unsuccessful attempt to relieve him. She used to bring food and water by means of a plank placed between her own dwelling and his. When 'Ā'ishah asked her to be present at 'Uthmān's fateful interview with 'Alī, Ṭalḥah and Zubayr at her house, Ṣafīyyah joined forces and defended the unfortunate Khalīfah to the best of her ability.

She died in 50 H. in the month of Ramaḍān in



the reign of Mu'āwiyah, leaving a fortune of two hundred thousand dirhams in land and goods. She was buried in Jannat al-Baqi' at Medina. Her dwelling in Medina was bought by Mu'āwiyah for 1,80,000 dirhams.

### 11. MAYMŪNAH

(May God bless her)

Maymūnah was the daughter of Hārith of the Hawāzin tribe of Sa'sa' and a sister-in-law of 'Abbās, Prophet's uncle. Her first husband was Mas'ūd b. 'Amr b. 'Umayr Thaqafi and, after her divorce, she married Abū Rahm who died soon after. She lived as a widow in Mecca where the Prophet sent his marriage proposal. As she was fifty-one at the time of marriage, the only idea prompting the nuptials was the alleviation of her lot and placation of her family, particularly 'Abbās, the Prophet's uncle.

The Prophet's desire to marry Maymūnah at Mecca was thwarted by the Meccans in order to shorten his stay there. The marriage therefore took place at Sarif, a village north of Mecca. Her brother-in-law acted as her guardian at the ceremony.

Maymūnah received a dowry of 5000 dirhams. She survived many of the Prophet's wives and died in 61 H. at Sarif, the village where she was married. Her tomb is a good spiritual resort of travellers. Khālīd b. al-Walīd was Maymūnah's nephew and greatly cherished by her. After the departure of the Apostle with her aunt, the great warrior called his men and said: "Prophet Muḥammad is neither an astrologer

nor a magician. Whatever he says is the revealed word of God. It is better you all become his followers." He himself was the first among them to embrace Islam. It is said that there was some verbal altercation between him and Abū Jahal's son 'Ikrimah who declared that Muḥammad (on whom be peace) was the murderer of his uncle in the Battle of Badr and he would have his revenge first and last. But none dared to displease Khālīd who was the greatest warrior of the day. The latter, along with 'Uthmān b. Ṭalḥah, left for Medina to sit at the feet of the Prophet of Islam. This man, later on, became the "Sword of Islam." Islam was making progress by leaps and bounds and both the warriors knew which way the wind blew.

This marriage led to the establishment of a close liasion between the parties, swelling the ranks of supporters to the glorious cause of Islam. Fighting against one's own kith was a foolish game, and the Quraysh were fast closing their ranks.

Maymūnah was very fond of liberating slaves and her marriage with the Prophet gave her a unique opportunity for the gratification of her cherished desire. When in dire need, she would not hesitate to borrow from others. Once the amount became sufficiently heavy and somebody asked how she was going to repay it. She said: "The Holy Prophet says that if you have a mind to repay your debt, the Almighty would provide means for its liquidation." This shows that *niyyat* (intention) is the essence of faith. She used to write to her relatives explaining the virtues of Islam and its rituals and dogmas. She was a God-



fearing lady and her piety and humility were proverbial. The Prophet called her a symbol of goodness. She was fond of reforming women and exhorting them to be good and virtuous. She has related forty-eight Traditions, and bequeathed a vast knowledge of *Fiqh*. The Prophet loved her as well as her four sisters, especially Umm al-Faḍl Lubābat al-Kubrā, the wife of 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, and the second personality after Khadījah, the first wife of the Prophet, to believe in Islam. It was she who struck Abū Lahab, the foremost enemy of Islam and leader of the opposite group. Maymūnah was only twenty-six when her husband died and the Prophet married her simply because all her relatives were great warriors and people of position. Moreover, her marriage brought another revelation of the Qur'ān:

"And any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her;—this only for thee, and not for the Believers (at large)."<sup>25</sup>

The Prophet called her Maymūnah (blessed) because he married her on the occasion when he and his followers entered Mecca after years of exile without fear of their safety. Maymūnah always remembered Sarif, the place where she first joined the Prophet. According to her instruction, she was buried there after her death. Ibn 'Abbās recited the funeral prayers and ordered the people to move slowly with the dead body as she was a pious wife of the Apostle.

According to 'Ā'ishah, the most sagacious wife of

the Prophet, Maymūnah was pious as well as affectionate to her relatives. She was a great authority in *Fiqh*. Once a woman fell ill and she vowed to God that if she recovered from illness, she would go and say her prayers in Bayt-ul-Muqaddas. After her recovery she met Maymūnah, but she said: "Offer your prayers in the Masjid of Medina as it will be equal to one thousand prayers' reward." She was fond of setting free slave-girls and women and the Prophet of God always paid great tribute to her.

## 12. MARYAM QIBṬIYAH

(May God bless her)

After the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, the Prophet invited the nobility of Arabia to a dinner and sent personal invitations to rulers of Syria and other countries, to participate in the feast where many of them embraced Islam. Maryam, known as Maria bint Shim'un (Simon), a Copt maiden, was sent to the Prophet with her sister Sīrīn by Muqawqis, the chief of Copts, alongwith horses and camels and pet animals as gifts. In those days, according to the custom of the time, slave-girls were presented as gifts to rulers and rich aristocrats. Therefore, when the Governor sent word to the Prophet that these girls were honourable ladies, they were assured of a cordial welcome.

Both the girls embraced Islam before their arrival in the Muslim camp. Maryam was admitted into the harem as Prophet's wife and a revelation came from God: "Why holdest thou to be forbidden that which Allah has made lawful to thee? Thou seekest to please



thy consorts."<sup>26</sup> Moreover, he wanted to please the Governor and to reassure him of friendliness in regard to mutual support. Some important events were to flow from this diplomatic alliance. The sister of the new bride was married to Ḥasan b. Ṣalāt since conjunction of two sisters in marriage is not permissible under Divine law, because being co-wives they cannot enjoy true and natural love. Maryam was not allotted an ordinary hut in the vicinity of the Mosque where other wives lived, but a garden-house was built for her in upper Medina, where, in the heat of summer, she used to receive visits from the Prophet (this house was afterwards called *Mashrabah Umm Ibrāhīm*). "Certainly it was an honour one would not have expected to be conferred on a slave-girl without some special reasons," writes a great English historian.

A most sensational event in the annals of Islam then came to pass. His new wife bore the Prophet a son who was named Ibrāhīm. Maryam was the only wife, after Khadījah, to have this honour, and from all quarters gifts and greetings poured in. This event was the only instance of prodigal expenditure in the Prophet's household. Rejoicings and thanksgiving were held throughout the length and breadth of the land. The Prophet considered himself as the most blessed of men because, he thought, Ibrāhīm would be the prop of his mission and the staff of his old age. His love for Zayd, an adopted son, was well known. So one can imagine the height of his happiness at the

birth. An English writer says: "Ibrahim's birth had given him pleasure, perhaps equal to the conquest of Mecca." The history of the birth of Ḥaḍrat Ismā'il to Ḥājirah, wife of Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm, in the barren years was repeated because even the Prophet had given up the hope of getting any child.

Maryam was loved and liked by all the wives as she had brought a thrill of joy in the Prophet's life. He spent most of his time in her company and fondled the little babe when he joined them in their garden home. But mysterious are the ways of God! He trieth those he loveth! From his cradle to the grave Muḥammad (peace be upon him) was a prey to all sorts of tribulations and afflictions. His last days were darkened by the tragedy of his little child's death, as yet a toddler. From the very day of preaching Islam up to the last day he was in trouble. The loss occasioned deep sorrow, but he did not give way to heroics and lamentations for fear of displeasing his Lord. He admonished all to stop weeping for "Verily we all have to return to Him." The whole city, which a few months back had worn a festival look, was plunged in grief. "How could we save him when it was not the will of Heaven?" Finally he bent over the body of Ibrāhīm and looked upon him with a great restraint and said: "The eye flows with tears and the heart with grief, but I say nothing except that which pleases the Lord. O Ibrāhīm, we are grieved over you. We are not to go against His will as He is our master." Then he looked lovingly and with pity at Maria, comforting her by saying: "He has a nurse



in Paradise? The remaining days of his nursing will be done in Paradise."

It is said that the people witnessed an eclipse of the sun and the moon about this time and attributed these to mourning by powers of Heaven. But the Prophet declared: "The sun and the moon care not for the life or death of a mortal." Maryam died five years after the death of her son Ibrāhīm and was buried near his grave in al-Baqī'. The Prophet in the tenth year of Hijrah gave his last convocation. While standing on a camel at the peak of the mountain, he reminded the audience of the rights of women on men and told them that the essence of virtue lay in good conduct. He asked them to listen carefully, as this might be his last congregation. "I have perfected the religion and brought all rituals under schedule. People responded with the acclamation: "We stand witness to the fact that you have delivered your message." He told them to convey his last message to all those who were not present in the assembly, namely, that "It is virtue only that counts for superiority of one over the other. For the rest, all are equal in the eye of God and no one is great simply by virtue of caste or pedigree. You should all forget the past and live like brothers and forgive old feuds as I have done today." This *khutbah* was a brilliant sermon, unsurpassed in the history of oration. Finally, he held a conference with his wives where he reminded them of the revelation forbidding marriage with the Prophet's wives. "His wives are their mothers," reads the Divine commandment.<sup>27</sup>

27. xxxiii. 6.

Another commandment said: "O Prophet, say to thy consorts: If it be that ye desire the life of this world, and its glitter,—then come, I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner."<sup>28</sup> But they unanimously declined the gift of worldly goods and affirmed their abiding faith in God, the Apostle and the Day of Judgment. The entire world was aghast at the grimness of their ascetic determination, especially the enemies of the Prophet who thought that his wives were like the inmates of a dungeon, spoiling for liberty. This event is a landmark in the history of human freedom for its unsurpassed challenge to the "prisoners" to break the shackles of captivity and march out into freedom. No human charter, not even the old English Magna Charta, can claim to have given a fairer condition of freedom, and no legislation can boast of fundamental rights better than what Islam has given to womankind. The pious mothers preferred to live as widows of the Prophet and refused to avail themselves of the choice offered. Indeed, their lives had suffered "a sea-change" as a result of their contact with the Divine Preacher and they refused to be lured by the meretriciousness of the world. Muḥammad (peace be upon him) whom the Qur'ān<sup>29</sup> had permitted to repudiate any wife he pleased and to take any he desired, did not discard any wife. So all the wives declared to die as his sacred trust, because he did justice among them all. Even in his journeys he took his wives by rotation.

28. xxxiii. 28.

29. *Vide* xxxiii. 51.



After this last expedition, he fell ill and was permitted to lie in 'Ā'ishah's house by other wives of the Prophet, as God's revelations came oftener there than anywhere else, and he expected the last message, if any, before death. He breathed his last there, and the spirit of the "Best of the Creation" soared to Heaven and the serene happiness of eternal life, away from the sorrows of this troubled world. May God's blessings be upon him for ever, and may he bring salvation to all believers!

The Prophethood having reached the apex of its glory, it vanished for ever. But his *Sunnah* and the revealed book, i.e. Qur'ān, remain a guide up to the Day of Judgment.

Maryam lived in Medina till her death which occurred five years later. She was buried in Jannat-ul-Baqī'. Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr and Ḥaḍrat 'Umar held this lady in great honour and her pension continued in favour of her relatives, as she was not only the Mother of the Faithful but also the Mother of Ibrāhīm who was the cherished son of the Holy Prophet of God and had died in infancy to the great anguish of the Muslim world. "Every soul shall taste death and only God shall survive till the end of this world." The revelation of the Holy Qur'ān turned out to be correct. May Almighty bless the Prophet and his wives, i.e. Mothers of the Faithful.

## Chapter 6

### CONCLUSION

Muhammad (peace be upon him) passed an impeccable youth in the deserts of Arabia, living laborious days absorbed in meditation and prayer. He married a widowed lady, Khadijah, who was fifteen years his senior, and spent the best part of his life with her, until he was well past fifty. She had been married twice and was the mother of two sons and three daughters when she espoused the Prophet. Even the worst traducers of the Prophet and Islam have not a word of cavil against the exalted pair. Not a line has been written in history to cast aspersions on the Prophet of God during this period of his prime. At a time when people were out to oppose the Prophet and harboured sinister designs against his life and honour, calling him a liar and madman, it was so easy to scandalise him as a womaniser (God forbid). However, the truth is inexorable and nowhere in history do we find a single stigma against his name either before or after the dawn of Revelation. Even after his marriage with Khadijah, he courted solitude, practising austerities as an ascetic in a cave in the outskirts of Mecca.

After the demise of Khadijah, he contracted marriage with Sawdah, a widow in dire straits. Sawdah was a new convert, devoted to Islam and its Prophet.



The sole motive with the Prophet in marrying this elderly lady was philanthropy, and exigencies of domesticity. The Prophet's children were still young and he wanted a female to look after his household affairs. Meanwhile, Abū Bakr (later on the first Caliph of Islam), with praiseworthy motives of his own, had offered the hand of his talented daughter, 'Ā'ishah. The Prophet had such deep regard for Abū Bakr that he used to say: "I have rewarded the services of all, but God will reward Abū Bakr for his singular devotion" (the Prophet had given his daughters in marriage to Ḥaḍrat 'Alī and 'Uthmān in recognition of their meritorious services to Islam). Thus the underlying reason for his marriage with 'Ā'ishah was that the Prophet was loath to disappoint Abū Bakr, his greatest supporter and disciple, particularly when, later on, this marriage was ordained by the Divine command. Hence, he took 'Ā'ishah as his wife. 'Ā'ishah and Sawdah would have sufficed as wives to the Prophet and he would not have married recurrently had it not been for impediments besetting the path of his mission which necessitated the placation of re-clacit-rant tribes.

'Umar's daughter, Ḥafṣah, the Prophet's next wife, was a widow of a martyr in the Battle of Badr. The Prophet, in marrying her, sought to strengthen his relations with her father Ḥaḍrat 'Umar who was a redoubtable warrior and was well pleased to be brought on terms of parity with other disciples in regard to matrimonial affiliations.

The next lady to become the wife of the Prophet

was Zaynab bint Khuzaymah. She had been divorced by her first husband while her second husband had been killed in the Battle of Uhud. Her parents were non-Muslims and at Mecca. So, after her Muslim husband's martyrdom, there was none to take care of her. The Prophet admitted her into his household out of pity. She did not live long and died shortly after her marriage, probably within three months.

The next lady to enter the holy harem of the Prophet was Umm Salamah. She had arrived to join her husband, 'Abdullah, at Medina who died leaving her a helpless widow with a grown-up daughter and a child in gestation. She could not return to her father at Mecca, nor was there anyone to take care of her at Medina. She represented her plight to the Prophet who took her into his house as his wife. Although his household now consisted of young 'Ā'ishah, Ḥafṣah and the two helpless elderly widows of his faithful followers, Sawdah and Salamah, the Prophet had to take in another helpless female, Juwayriyah, belonging to the tribe of Banū Muṣṭaliq. She was a captive who had fallen to the lot of a soldier. Her appeal to the Prophet's mercy found a commiserating response and the Prophet of God ransomed her and accorded her the honour of becoming his wife. This was an act of wisdom. Islam gained more than the Prophet by this alliance as testified by history.

Later on, another lady had to be married by the Prophet under God's order. As already explained, the Prophet had given his haughty cousin Zaynab in marriage to Zayd his adopted son, a freed slave. This



high-born lady treated the poor manumitted slave with unmitigated contempt so that he was constrained, in spite of the Prophet's warning, to discard her. Once she was discarded, the responsibility of her well-being devolved on the Prophet, for it was at his guarantee that the people of Zaynab had consented to her marriage with Zayd. After her divorce no Arab of high birth would marry a lady discarded by an ex-slave. So the Prophet was compelled to marry Zaynab himself to honour his pledge. The revealed orders of God heralded this as most of Prophet's mundane actions. It was for this reason that he declared: "My words are not contrary to the words of God, but the words of God can contradict mine." Incidentally, Zaynab's case indirectly established that in arranging a marriage the woman's wishes must be consulted, which is a recognised trait of Islamic marriage. Thrusted and forced marriages are not known to Islam.

Unhappy marriages are no part of Allah's Ordinance. Hence, the offer and acceptance of contract in marriage should not be taken lightly. In Islam the decisive voice in marriage is that of the girl. When Zaynab and her relatives were not pleased with this marriage, God came to Zaynab's help. Indirectly, this incident repudiated the prevalent custom amongst the pagan Arabs of treating their adopted sons as their real sons which is against the tenets of Islam, which believes in nearness, not dearness, and this is why the grandson whose father has predeceased him cannot get a share in property according to Islamic

law of inheritance. To make a gift or alms is the best method for orphans' security.

Then followed the marriage with Umm Ḥabībah, daughter of Abū Sufyān, the arch enemy of Islam and its Prophet. This marriage was a pure blessing and yielded very good results. After this marriage Abū Sufyān grew less and less blatant in his hostility towards Islam and the Holy Prophet, and soon after, Mecca was conquered by the Prophet. This marriage showed political sagacity. Not for passion's sake, but for the advancement of Islam, was this marriage solemnised.

Very soon after this marriage another helpless captive of the war of Khaybar, a Jewess of very noble birth had to be given asylum in the house of the Prophet. This was Ṣafīyyah who captivated the Prophet's heart by her Divine theory of universal love for persons of all castes and creeds. Incidentally, it established the tradition of political fraternity with the Hebrew race. After this marriage the Jews never fought against Islam, as it was their custom to respect the families whom they gave their daughters in marriage.

The last but one marriage of the Prophet was a purely political one. Maymūnah's father Ḥārith was the leader of the powerful Banū Hawāzin, and the Prophet's marriage with this noble lady promoted the spread of Islam. She had already been divorced twice. She was the relative of the great general Khālīd b. Walīd and was instrumental in winning him over to Islam. The Prophet was sixty years of age at the



time. But he had to exemplify the principle that he had no enmity against anyone.

Maryam, the twelveth wife of the Holy Prophet, was presented to him by the ruler of Egypt and he married her after setting her free. The Egyptian monarch was to be placated and pleased. Moreover, God had another child to give him and then snatch it away to test his resignation. Even the best of the creation of God could feel helpless before the Almighty.

To sum up, the Holy Prophet married Khadijah, an old widow as his first wife, and after her demise, married 'Ā'ishah. For twenty-five years he had observed strict monogamy. Of the other ten wives, Ḥafṣah and Zaynab bint Jāhsh became obligatory and he had no option but to marry them, firstly, to save the honour of his most powerful supporter, 'Umar, and, secondly, to save his own. Three of the remaining (Sawdah, Umm Salamah and Zaynab bint Khuzaymah) were helpless widows of very faithful followers of the Prophet who had died for the cause of Islam. The marriage with Umm Ḥabībah and Maymūnah were purely political and even the worst critics of the Prophet had to admit this fact. Of the remaining wives, Juwayriyah and Ṣafīyyah, were captives of war who, instead of being treated as slaves, were ransomed and given the status of married ladies. The last wife, Qibṭiyah, was a gift from the ruler of Egypt, who had to be retained according to the custom of the day.

While such are the real facts of the case, some

hostile critics have charged the Prophet with promiscuity, lust and other improper motives. If the Prophet had wanted to satisfy his lust, he could have had any number of virgins in his youth as wives as no number was yet fixed by God, before Islam.

Let us examine the nature and character to the ladies he married and their ages.

His first wife, Khadijah, was aged forty and was fifteen years his senior. He spent more than a quarter of a century with her without the least sign of satiety or boredom, or a yearning for a virgin girl. Khadijah had given him everything he wanted in marriage, i.e. children, a quiet home-life and freedom from want.

After Khadijah's death, the Prophet married 'Ā'ishah who was a virgin, but all his subsequent marriages were with widows or divorcees, many of whom had been divorced twice before marrying the Prophet. Again, in the case of 'Ā'ishah can it be the act of a lover of women to marry a girl who had not yet attained puberty and wait for years till she was of age to join him as wife? He preferred to take senior ladies with the sole object of furthering the cause of his mission. His marriage with Qibṭiyah was an act of statesmanship intended to please the ruler of Egypt.

That the Prophet never knew any sexual enjoyment till his twenty-fifth year, although he lived in a society where young men were permitted to keep slave-girls. He spent the best part of his life (from the twenty-fifth to fiftieth year) with Khadijah, a superannuated widow, without betraying any coolness



or lack of love; that all his wives (other than young 'Ā'ishah) were senior widows or divorcees and some of them were helpless widows of his faithful followers who would otherwise have become destitute and that, in some cases, he contracted these matrimonial alliances to placate certain powerful families, which clearly demonstrates that lasciviousness was no part of the Prophet's polygamous role. Marmaduke Pickthall, in his commentary in *Glorious Koran* has summed up the position as follows:

"Some of them were widows of men killed in war, one was captive when he made the marriage the excuse for emancipating all the conquered tribes and restoring their property, two were daughters of his enemies and his alliance with them paved the way for peace. It is also noteworthy that the period of these marriages was also the period of his greatest activities, when he had little rest from campaigning and was always busy with the problems of a growing empire."

Again, Rev. Bosworth Smith in his book, *Muhammad and Muhammadanism*, eulogises Islam and its founder in the following words:

"The laws affecting women are indeed the most minute and the most considerate in the Quran. It was here that Muhammad made his principal reforms and, though to a European these reforms may seem slight, in contrast with the previous condition of the Arab women they were considerable. The restriction of polygamy and recommendation of monogamy, the institution of prohibited degrees against the horrible laxity of divorce, and stringent rules as to the support of divorced women during a certain period by their former husbands and as to the maintenance of children, the innovation of creating women heirs-at-law, the abolition of the custom which treated a man's widow as a part of his hereditary chattels, form a considerable list of remov-

ed disabilities. The Prophet goes on to advise reconciliation between husbands and wives by means of arbitrators chosen by the two disputants and frequently counsels kindness to wives, and it is a fact that no profound legislator ever made such important changes in favour of women as did Muhammad. The raising of women to the position of heirs is not the only innovation that the Prophet made in the law of inheritance."

Islam has maintained high principles of morality. It introduced *iddat*.<sup>1</sup>

Only three motives lay behind the marriages of the Prophet: philanthropy, political exigency and behest of God. No fourth motive can possibly be ascribed. As for the wives, there was no lure of luxury to tempt their cupidity. All of them lived a secluded life in mud-huts and performed their domestic chores like common housewives. If the believers had an occasion to ask anything of the Prophet's wives, they were enjoined to ask it from behind the curtain. This

1. The Holy Qur'ān (ii. 234) says: "If any of you die and leave widows behind, they shall wait concerning themselves for four months and ten days; when they have fulfilled their term, there is blame on you if they dispose themselves of in a just and reasonable manner."

In verse 240 it is prescribed: "Those of you who die and leave widows should bequeath for their widows a year's maintenance and residence; but if they leave (the residence), there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves." Thus provision should be made for the maintenance of the widow for at least one year and the period of four months and ten days is only the period of *'iddat*, that is, the interval which must elapse between the termination of her former marriage on the death of her husband and the contracting of the second one, if any. It has also been made clear that if during the period of one year, a widow chooses to take another husband after the expiry of the period of *'iddat*, no blame shall attach to her. Polygamy was also allowed in Islam but was to be practised only in rare circumstances. Abbe Hav and Lady Duff Gordon have both remarked that in the generality of cases sheer force of circumstances drives people to polygamy in the East.



warning is a check on rushing unannounced into the private apartment of a person, without seeking permission to have an interview. The knocking at the door is not an English custom but a behest of God, as revealed in the Qur'ān. The common law, too, takes cognizance of trespass: a man may not be free or be sitting in privacy. Therefore, this lesson is of great importance even today. Section 41 P.P.C. defines it: "Whoever enters into or upon property in the possession of another with intent to commit an offence or to intimidate, insult or annoy any person in possession of such property, or having lawfully entered into or upon such property unlawfully remains there with intent thereby to intimidate, insult or annoy any such person or with intent to commit an offence." The source of this is Islamic jurisprudence.

They were further reminded of their duties by the Qur'ān which says:

"O Consorts of the Prophet! if any of you were guilty of evident unseemly conduct, the punishment would be doubled to her and that is easy for Allah."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, a revelation was read over to them:

"O Consorts of the Prophet! ye are not like any of the (other) women: if ye do fear (God), be not too complaisant of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire."<sup>3</sup>

But after the victory of Mecca there was a tide of material prosperity among the Muslims. The Prophet's wives, too, expressed a desire to enjoy more of the

2. xxxiii. 30. 3. xxxiii. 32.

worldly goods, but the Prophet refused to accede to their request. Another revelation in this respect came:

"But any of you that is devout in the service of Allah and His Apostle, and works righteousness,—to her shall We grant her reward twice: and We have prepared for her a generous sustenance."<sup>4</sup>

"And recite what is rehearsed to you in your homes, of the Signs of Allah and His Wisdom: for Allah understands the finest mysteries and is well acquainted (with them)."<sup>5</sup>

All these gentle ladies realised the obligation of the Qur'ānic order that "when Allah and His messenger have decided an affair (for them), they should not (after that) claim any say in their affairs. And whoso disobeys Allah and His messenger he verily goeth astray in error manifest." All his wives decided to carry out God's command and went on fasts for many days as a mark of repentance. In future they decided never to live in a richly manner.

In spite of the fact that he had a number of wives, none had a complaint against him, because he was a just man and entitled *al-Amīn*. Grain, clothes and all household necessities were distributed equally among the wives regardless of seniority or pedigree. God ordained in the Qur'ān: "Say: I am human like yourself." He had to undergo all hardships of family life and suffer from love and frailties of life. He wanted to set an enduring example for the future generations. The Qur'ān reminded him:

"Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and believing in

4. xxxiii. 31. 5. xxxiii. 34.



Allah."<sup>6</sup>

God also had to guide His Prophet even in marriage relations. These relations were sometimes subjected to control certain matters, e.g. the false charge on Hadrat 'Ā'ishah who was saved only by Divine revelation, otherwise the Prophet himself was in a fix. Similarly, on the eve of marriage with Zaynab, the divorcee of Zayd, revelation cleared the doubts. Similarly, God advised the Prophet and touched into the inner feelings of his wives which ever came in their hearts. Many warnings to his wives were revealed against any wrong action.

The Prophet treated his wives with kindness and never threatened them with divorce. He had no jewellery or fancy dress to please his wives, but a tender and loving heart, which is the sole ambition of women. Even as master of Arabia he led an ascetic life. But for all his abstemiousness in regard to the worldly goods, he was ever anxious to raise the status of women in his community and society. 'Ā'ishah, the wife of the Apostle, has reported that her great husband had remarked many a time that "the best of you is he who is good to his wife, and women are like pleasing roses". According to a report from 'Abdullah b. 'Umar, the Prophet declared: "The whole world is a thing to be made use of and the best thing in the world is a virtuous wife." But his affectionate temperament did not stand in the way of his devotion to the Deity. He used to stand for prayers

<sup>6</sup> 6. iii. 110.

for the greater part of the night, and was weary and footsore as a result of his night-long vigils. To an expostulator for the reasons of this day-and-night bowing to God, he replied: "Should I prove forgetful of the blessings bestowed upon me and leave off prayers?" The Prophet wasted no money on his person. He never dreamed of hoarding wealth. He always prayed not to get so much money as to turn him away from the right path.

Muhammad (on whom be peace) was inflexibly just in his awards. 'Ā'ishah has reported that once the case of a woman of Makhzumiyah tribe, who had committed theft, gave them much anxiety. But who would plead for her to the Messenger of Allah? The choice fell on 'Uthmān, son of Zayd, who was a favourite of the Prophet. So 'Uthmān interceded on behalf of the culprit. The Messenger of Allah said: "Do you plead for a crime ordained against by Allah?" Then he got up and delivered an impassioned sermon concluding: "Verily those who were before you were destroyed because when a noble man from among them committed theft, they forbore to execute sentence on him. By Allah, had Fātimah, daughter of Muhammad, committed theft, I would have cut off her hand." If like Arabia other countries follow the Islamic code of laws, a large number of crimes can be reduced.

The Qur'ān ordains staunchness in administration of justice:

"O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your



kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor : for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve and if ye distort (justice), or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.”<sup>7</sup>

The Qur’ān further enjoins :

“O ye who believe ! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from Justice. Be just : that is next to Piety : and fear Allah, for Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.”<sup>8</sup>

The entire social fabric of the world is based on justice, and, indeed, one of the chief attributes of God is that He is “Just”. “Consequently, the conception of justice in Islam is that its dispensation is a Divine ordinance. No wonder, modern jurisprudence lays so much stress on impartiality of evidence.”<sup>9</sup>

\*The Prophet demonstrated that marriage in Islam is a complete code of law which creates definite rights and obligations. In the West, people are giving women rights which Islam accorded fourteen hundred years ago. The leaders of Feminist Movement find in Islam a just fulfilment of their demands. Islam gave woman equality with man and taught the illiterate Arabs that the females were as much of human beings as the males. At the same time, women were reminded by the Qur’ān to be pious and true to God and His messenger. It imposed certain restrictions on their dress and deportment to protect their chastity and honour and thereby ensure a healthy and stable

7. iv. 135.

8. v. 9.

9. Ramaswami, *Law of Evidence*, Allahabad, Law Book Co., 1962, p. 12.

family life. Similarly, men were ordered not to accept and reject at will any woman who came their way. Rulers and aristocrats had developed the institution of *harem* and there was no limit to the number of concubines they could keep. Islam rendered a distinct social service by fixing the number of wives. It allowed women to participate in religious wars and other social emergencies, but, at the same time, devised precautionary measures to check promiscuous mixing of men and women. It made full provisions for the exigencies of both peace and war. Formerly, there in Bahawalpur State was an institution under the name of Jāmi’ah Milliyah, which has now been converted into a full-fledged Islamic University. It is to be hoped that institutions of this type would be created all over the country to popularise Islamic Studies amongst all classes. “Serious or trivial,” says Hogarth, an English writer, “his daily behaviour has been instituted as a canon which millions observe to this day with conscious mimicry. Himself an unschooled man, Muhammad was, nevertheless, responsible for a Book still considered by one-eighth of mankind as the embodiment of all science and theory.”

In the recent Islamic Seerat Conference which is a landmark of People’s Party Government of Pakistan, a great service has been done to Islam and the Islamic world. It has shown to the world the greatness of the personality of the Holy Prophet. The Minister of Religious affairs, Maulana Kausar Niazi, who participated in the London Islamic Moot in April 1976 has stated that the Muslims should



make serious efforts to reconstruct the thoughts of Islam and tell the world what the Holy Prophet has done for Islam and the whole world.

Recently the Islamic Summit Conference held in Lahore of the Muslim countries is a landmark in history and has made Pakistan a fortress of Islam. Printing of errorless Holy Qur'ān in Pakistan is rather a service to the Holy Prophet and God.

It is heartening to note that the largest selling book in America last year was the English translation of the Holy Qur'ān. It is not just a species of scripture or literature but a complete social and ethical code of life measuring up to the highest ideals of human society evolved through ages and tempered by practical exigencies of life. Indeed, Muḥammad's life was the epitome of all that is noblest and best in mankind, apropos of both self and society as well as the Ultimate in human destiny. As such it is a never-failing source of inspiration and guidance for all people and for all times.

Muḥammad (peace be upon him) appeared on the Arabian scene fourteen hundred years ago and preached to a limited section of society, but his teachings convey a lesson for the entire human race, cutting across the barriers of clime and country, colour and creed. This constitutes the greatest miracle of his achievements—a miracle which the so-called civilised nations of the West, and even the United Nations of the world, have strived in vain to accomplish. But perhaps the heart of his miracle is the transformation wrought in the character of his wives. They were

drawn from all strata of society and belonged to different classes and communities—decrepit widows and waifs, stranded females and discarded divorcees. But such was the vivifying force of his personality that they suffered cheerfully the privations of want and hunger without a word of quarrelsome complaint. When after the Prophet's demise, the Caliphate of Islam entered upon a phase of material prosperity and the wives of the Prophet were granted handsome pensions, none of these noble souls turned their access of wealth to personal account but passed it on to the poor and the needy in the traditional style of their illustrious spouse. Little wonder that the good ladies were held in the highest esteem and treated with utmost respect by the succeeding Caliphs and aristocracy.

It is the height of perversity on the part of the Western critics to regard the ladies of the Prophet's *harem* as anything but a galaxy of unique piety and virtue whose exemplary lives will remain a perennial source of guidance and inspiration to the womankind of the world. Their burial prayers were conducted by eminent men and Caliphs who were ordered to proceed slowly with their bier as a mark of respect. A careful study of these pages will dissipate the uncharitable illusions of narrow-minded critics and inspire a feeling of reverence in the minds of not only believers but also non-believers who are apt to be critical of the Prophet's domestic life. The believer's faithfulness has rightly been adjudged to be a stepping stone to salvation and a measure of his faith.



## MUHAMMAD : THE HOLY PROPHET

*By Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar*

The Prophet of Islam has found his biographers in all ages and in all climes. The last three centuries have produced a number of them in European countries, most of them, alas, have written with biased minds, wilfully shutting their eyes to the greatness of the Prophet and doing all in their power to poison the minds of their readers against Islam. In this biography of the Holy Prophet of Islam, the facts and their details are minutely worked out and the sequence of the narrative is very natural.

## UMAR THE GREAT (Al-Faruq)

*By Allama Shibli Nu'mani. Translated by M. Zafar Ali Khan  
and Prof. M. Saleem*

The first volume contains a detailed and most authentic biography of the Second Caliph of Islam. The second volume is devoted to the constitution of the State and administrative affairs. The concluding two chapters deal with his personal habits, manners and family.

## LIFE OF ABU BAKR (First Caliph of Islam)

*By Muhammad Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani  
Translated by Dr. Moin-ul-Haq*

This book is a faithful English translation of *Sirat as-Siddiq*. That the task of maintaining and preserving what the Prophet had achieved could have been fulfilled only by the most devout of his Companions, is amply illustrated by the short but eventful regime of the First Caliph of Islam. It was due to the sterling virtues of Abu Bakr that the infant State of the *Khilafat* was saved from total collapse.